

Al Shabaab as a transnational actor: A critical theoretical analysis

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

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Abstract:

The Somalia-based militant group, Al Shabaab, has conducted mass casualty transnational terrorist attacks and has become a regional security threat. In an effort to uncover the best explanation of the drivers behind the group's use of transnational terror, a critical analysis of Rational Choice Theory, Spill-over Conflict Theory and Regional War Complex Theory was conducted. Evaluating each theory according to whether its assumptions held true, the theory offered a parsimonious explanation of Al Shabaab's use of transnational terror which could be supported by at least three types of evidence, the strengths and weaknesses of each theory, with regard to explaining Al Shabaab's transnational terror were identified. The findings showed that Al Shabaab as a transnational actor should not be seen as a linear transformation of the group, moving outwards from Somalia, but connected to an interlinked web between countries in the Horn of Africa, where domestic vulnerabilities such as political and socio-economic marginalisation and a vulnerability to radicalisation allow for the cross-pollination of intent, and the capabilities to carry out attacks. As such, the regional and international inter-connections captured by the Regional War Complex offered the best explanation of the drivers of Al Shabaab's use of transnational terror. Although Rational Choice Theory most clearly highlighted Al Shabaab's intent to transform from a domestic actor to a regional one, and the Spill-over Model showed that refugees could offer a recruitment source, it was the increased regional capabilities through the establishment of affiliates located outside of Somalia which gave the group the capacity to carry out transnational attacks and to operate as a transnational actor.

Acronyms and abbreviations

AIAI - Al Itihaad Al Islamiya

Al I'tisan - Al I'tisan Kitab wal Sunnah

AMISOM - African Union Mission in Somalia

ARPCT - Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism

ARS - Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia

Al Shabaab - Harakat Shabaab Al Mujahidin

ASWJ – Ahlu Sunna wal Jamaa

AU - African Union

FGS - Federal Government of Somalia

GTD - Global Terrorism Database

KDF - Kenya Defence Forces

IGAD - Inter-Governmental Authority on Development

IGASOM - IGAD Peace Support Mission to Somalia

MDAA - Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement

MYC - Muslim Youth Centre

OAU - Organisation of African Unity

ONLF - Ogaden National Liberation Front

SNA - Somali National Alliance

SNM - Somali National Movement

SPM - Somali Patriotic Movement

SRRC- Somali Restoration and Reconciliation Council

TFG - Transitional Federal Government

TNG - Transitional National Government

UIC - Union of Islamic Courts

UN - United Nations

UNHCR - UN High Commissioner for Refugees

UNOSOM I- United Nations Operation in Somalia

UNOSOM II- United Nations Operation in Somalia II

USC - United Somali Congress

WSLF - Western Somali Liberation Front

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Defining the research problem

With the Somalia-based militant group, Al Shabaab¹, carrying out attacks outside of its primary areas of operation in Somalia, specifically in Kenya, Djibouti and Uganda, it is evident that the group has become a regional security threat and it is necessary to explore Al Shabaab's use of transnational terror.²

Harakat Shabaab Al Mujahidin (Al Shabaab) first emerged in Somalia as the militant wing of the then-political body, the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC), around 2003. Amid the protracted conflict in the country, the militant wing formally split from the Islamic Courts after the UIC's defeat by Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces and Ethiopian troops in 2006.³ Al Shabaab's principal objective at the time was to establish a Wahhabi Caliphate⁴ in Somalia by way of insurgency against the TFG forces, Ethiopia and, later, troops of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).⁵ Despite being driven from Mogadishu in 2011 by AMISOM forces, Al Shabaab has maintained a strong operational presence in Somalia, sustaining strongholds in southern and central regions of the country, and has continued to battle against the subsequent Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), which replaced the TFG in August 2012. The group has carried out attacks outside of Somalia while simultaneously adopting a more transnational-focused rhetoric circulated through websites, audio recordings and via social media. In statements released in 2011, the group declared war against Kenya and has

¹ Although the author recognises alternative spellings, 'Al Shabaab' has been selected for the purpose of this dissertation. This version has been selected as it is among the most common spellings used in available English literature on the subject.

² For further evidence of this, see recent attacks in Kenya (most significantly, the September 2013 attack against the Westgate shopping complex in Kenya's capital, Nairobi), as well as in Djibouti City on 25 May 2014 and threats made in a statement by prominent Al Shabaab commander, Fuad Mohamed Khalaf, on 22 May warning of further attacks in Kenya and elsewhere.

³ Jonathan Masters, "Al-Shabaab", *Council on Foreign Relations*, 23 September 2011, accessed 4 April 2015, www.cfr.org/somalia/al-shabaab/p18650

⁴ An Islamic state led by a supreme leader, based on the extremist principals of the Wahhabi movement. Evidence of this can be found in Hansen, Stig Jarle. *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group*. Oxford University Press, 2013; Rob Wise, "Al Shabaab", *Center for Strategic and International Studies*; Agbibo, Daniel. "Terrorism without Borders: Somalia's Al-Shabaab and the global jihad network." *Journal of Terrorism Research* 5, no. 1 (2014); Møller, Bjørn. "Somalia: From Stateless Order to Talibanisation?." *Elcano Newsletter* 54 (2009) and Ayoob, Mohammed, and Hasan Kosebalaban, eds. *Religion and politics in Saudi Arabia: Wahhabism and the state*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009.

⁵ Abdisaib M Ali, "The Al-Shabaab Al-Mujahidiin – A profile of the first Somali terrorist organisation", *Institute of Political Strategy, Wirtschaftsberatung, Berlin*

since issued threats against AMISOM-contributing countries and the US.⁶ While Al Shabaab's claims of bringing the war to Kenya, Uganda and even the US may contribute to an image of a transnational Al Shabaab, it is the occurrence of Al Shabaab attacks outside of Somalia which definitively make the group a transnational actor, demonstrating the intent, capability and opportunity to conduct transnational terror.⁷ On 9 July 2010, Al Shabaab militants carried out twin bombings targeting public viewing sights for the 2010 FIFA World Cup in Kampala, Uganda; at least 74 people were killed in the attacks.⁸ Since then, a number of cross-border assaults have taken place in Kenya's Garissa, Mandera and Wajir counties, and the group has orchestrated more organised attacks in larger urban centres, including Nairobi, Mombasa and Djibouti City. Among these attacks were the September 2013 siege of the Westgate shopping complex in Nairobi, in which 67 people were killed, and the April 2015 attack on Garissa University College in northern Kenya, where 148 students died. Given that terrorist attacks are driven by intent, capacity and opportunity, and that a terrorist operates within a triangular dynamic between the non-state organisation, the victim of an attack and the intended audience or target for that attack, what are the explanations for the drivers of Al Shabaab's use of transnational terror?

1.2 Literature survey

Although conceptualisations of terrorism are manifold⁹, there is consensus among multiple authors, including Walters, Midlarsky, Crenshaw and Yoshida as well as Ross, among others, that terrorism can be defined as a method of violence in which relatively small amounts of severe violence are able to generate significant shock and fear, which ultimately have an impact

⁶ Henry Gombya and Collins Wanzala, "Al Shabaab declares war on Kenya and calls in suicide bombers", *London Evening Post*, 28 October 2011; <http://www.thelondoneveningpost.com/al-shabaab-declares-war-on-kenya-and-calls-in-suicide-bombers/>

⁷ Examples of these references can be found at: "Al-Shabaab statement on deadly campus assault in Kenya", *Washington Post*, 4 April 2015, accessed April 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/al-shabab-statement-on-deadly-campus-assault-in-kenya/2015/04/04/4577ce52-dad9-11e4-8103-fa84725dbf9d_story.html; Olivia Becker, "Al Shabaab Promises 'Gruesome War' in Kenya After Massacre at University", *Vice News*, 4 April 2015, accessed April 2015 <https://news.vice.com/article/al-shabaab-promises-gruesome-war-in-kenya-after-massacre-at-university>; "Al Shabab Vows to Wage War on Civilians: Report", *CNBS News*, 4 April 2015, accessed April 2015, <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/al-shabab-vows-more-attacks-turning-kenya-red-blood-report-n335601>; Ndegwa Maina, "Al Shabaab Vows To Bring War on Kenyan Soil", *NairobiWire*, 23 May 2014, accessed May 2014, <http://nairobewire.com/2014/05/al-shabaab-vows-bring-war-kenyan-soil.html>

⁸ For a description of the attacks, see Al Jazeera report "Al-Shabaab claims Uganda bombings", viewable at www.aljazeera.com/new/africa/2010/07/

⁹ For studies into the debate regarding the conceptualisation of terrorism, see Tilly, Charles. "Terror, terrorism, terrorists." *Sociological Theory* 22, no. 1 (2004): 5-13.; Findley, Michael G., and Joseph K. Young. "Terrorism and civil war: A spatial and temporal approach to a conceptual problem." *Perspectives on Politics* 10, no. 02 (2012): 285-305; Crenshaw, Martha, ed. *Terrorism in context*. Penn State Press, 2010 and Hoffman, Bruce. "Defining Terrorism." *Social Science Record* 24, no. 1 (1986): 6-7; among others.

on a much wider area and scale than the initial attacks.¹⁰ The same is true for transnational terrorism. In their investigation into the interrelationship between domestic and transnational terrorism, Cameron Napps and Walter Enders¹¹ find that, while complex, it is apparent that domestic terrorism can lead to transnational terrorism. A low frequency of attacks outside of a terrorist organisation's primary area of operation is able to significantly, and perhaps disproportionately, convey the notion that the violence is uncontained and unpredictable. Terror actors often change their behaviour, as well as the nature and location of attacks, in order to maintain this unpredictability and the associated fear it produces. Al Shabaab has demonstrated such adaptability since its inception, transcending from an urban-based Islamist militia to a transnational terrorist organisation.¹² In Somalia, Islamist militias capitalise on militias which emerged in an ensuing security vacuum, basing their support on religion.¹³ A transnational terrorist organisation carries out attacks involving victims, targets, governments, institutions, or citizens of another country or within another country.¹⁴ Yet, what are the drivers of this adoption of transnational terror?

Rational choice theorists see such groups as choosing to engage in terrorist activities following the outcome of a rational cost/benefit analysis, in which conducting a terrorist attack is considered to be the best available option in the actor's endeavour to achieve a particular goal.¹⁵ By corollary, the use of transnational terror should follow a choice; the group chooses to engage in transnational terror to achieve a particular goal. Terrorism works within a dynamic encompassing the intent of the actor, the actor's capabilities, and opportunities presented by the surrounding context.¹⁶ The intent of a group is almost exclusively an internal dynamic,

¹⁰ See: Walter, Eugene V. "Violence and the Process of Terror." *American Sociological Review* (1964): 248-257; Midlarsky, Manus I., Martha Crenshaw, and Fumihiko Yoshida. "Why violence spreads: The contagion of international terrorism." *International Studies Quarterly* (1980): 262-298; Ross, Jeffrey Ian. "Structural causes of oppositional political terrorism: Towards a causal model." *Journal of Peace Research* 30, no. 3 (1993): 317-329 and Hutchinson, Martha Crenshaw. "The concept of revolutionary terrorism." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (1972): 383-396; among others.

¹¹ Napps and Enders, "A regional investigation into the interrelationship of domestic and transnational terrorism," 3.

¹² David M. Anderson and Jacob McKnight, "Understanding Al Shabaab: clan, Islam and insurgency in Kenya", *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 9: 537.

¹³ Anthony Vinci, "An analysis and comparison of armed groups in Somalia." *African Security Studies* 15, no. 1 (2006): 81

¹⁴ Walter Enders, Todd Sandler and Khusrav Gaibullov, "Domestic versus transnational terrorism: data, decomposition, and dynamics", *Journal of Peace Research*, 48(3), 2011: 302.

¹⁵ Ozgir Ozdamar, "The Al-Shabaab Al-Mujahidiin – A profile of the first Somali terrorist organisation" 1 (2) (2008): 92.

¹⁶ See Crenshaw, Martha. "Theories of terrorism: Instrumental and organizational approaches." *The Journal of strategic studies* 10, no. 4 (1987): 13-31; Ezell, Barry Charles, Steven P. Bennett, Detlof Von Winterfeldt, John Sokolowski, and Andrew J. Collins. "Probabilistic risk analysis and terrorism risk." *Risk Analysis* 30, no. 4

driven by the desires and ultimate goals of the group. The use of terror is a deliberate choice by a political actor in order to achieve a particular goal.¹⁷ Such a claim reflects the instrumental approach; the use of transnational terror is a rational choice to advance the goals underpinning the organisation. The choice is a result of an assessment of the available opportunities and constraints.

In a contrasting theory, the organisational approach equates a terrorist organisation to all other organisations, whether corporate or communal; here, the overarching aim of any organisation is its own survival.¹⁸ As such, it is not the political objectives of the group as a political actor which determine the actions of the group, but rather what the organisation requires to ensure its survival. These requirements emanate largely from the external context in which the organisation exists. Accordingly, a group's actions, including engaging in transnational terrorism, are not necessarily a direct reflection of the group's ideology or political objectives, but are necessitated by the need to ensure the survival of the group. Transnational terrorism is particularly useful in this regard as it serves to bolster a group's reputation or image, likely beyond such a group's genuine capabilities. Napps and Enders find that, groups with overarching domestic objectives may conduct transnational assaults to achieve a specific goal.¹⁹ Here, within the dynamic of intent, capability and opportunity, a presented opportunity to carry out a transnational attack is likely to supersede a domestic-orientated agenda to ensure the survival of the group.²⁰

Second image theorists posit that conflict is a product of the domestic composition of nation states, and that the spread of conflict, including the methods of violence employed therein, originates within the domestic environment of one country.²¹ Here, a conflict begins in one country and develops a cross-border dynamic in which violence spills over into a neighbouring state. Key contributors to the growing literature of the spill-over effects of conflict include

(2010): 575-589 and Salama, Sammy, and Lydia Hansell. "Does intent equal capability? Al-Qaeda and weapons of mass destruction." *Nonproliferation Review* 12, no. 3 (2005): 615-653.

¹⁷ See Hutchinson, Martha Crenshaw. "The concept of revolutionary terrorism." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (1972): 383-396 and Walter, Eugene V. "Violence and the Process of Terror." *American Sociological Review* (1964): 248-257.

¹⁸ Ozdamar, "Theorising terrorist behaviour" 93.

¹⁹ Napps and Enders, "A regional investigation into the interrelationship of domestic and transnational terrorism," 3.

²⁰ Cameron Napps and Walter Enders, "A regional investigation of the interrelationship between domestic and transnational terrorism: a time series analysis", *Defence and Peace Economics*, ahead-of-print, (2014): 7.

²¹ See: Waltz, Kenneth N. "Reflections on Theory of International Politics." *Neorealism and its Critics* (1986) for an overview of Image theories.

Kristian Gleditsch, Idean Salehyan and Kenneth Schultz. In their work on why civil wars spread across borders and lead to international disputes, Gleditsch, Salehyan and Schultz identify that civil wars can create new tensions due to spill-over effects from the conflict; factors such as mass refugee movement, cross-border damage and environmental impacts of the conflict come to affect the security of the neighbouring state.²² These effects can lead to an outbreak of conflict in the neighbouring state.

Despite examining civil wars and regional conflicts, Gleditsch, Salehyan and Schultz's work on the spill-over effects of violence has relevance when studying transnational terrorism. Gleditsch, Salehyan and Schultz argue that, in contrast to previous literature, today's conflicts are not necessarily fought over traditional issues such as territories or domestic resources; rather, the dynamics surrounding civil wars – which are, by definition, domestic – are central to subsequent international/regional disputes.²³ Gleditsch, Salehyan and Schultz outline at least three means through which the spread of conflict across borders occurs; these include intervention, externalisation and spill-over effects.

Broadly speaking, spill-over effects refer to the consequences of a civil conflict. The overall premise is that civil conflicts create new tensions as a consequence, within which transnational terrorism is a viable method of violence. One of the most prominent of these consequences is the mass influx of refugees into a neighbouring territory.²⁴ Here, subsequent conflict is a result of the unintended spill over of a civil strife and a neighbour's efforts to prevent or limit the detrimental impact within their own territory.²⁵ A prominent subject within this literature is the potential for militarisation among refugee populations.²⁶

However, Gleditsch, Salehyan and Schultz, as well as a number of other authors concerned with spill-over effects, are predominantly focused on the relationship between civil and

²² Kristian Gleditsch, Idean Salehyan and Kenneth Shultz, "Fighting at home, fighting abroad: How civil wars lead to international disputes", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, (2008): 2.

²³ Gleditsch, Salehyan and Schultz, "Fighting at home, fighting abroad", 2.

²⁴ Gleditsch, Salehyan and Schultz, "Fighting at home, fighting abroad", 9.

²⁵ Gleditsch, Salehyan and Schultz, "Fighting at home, fighting abroad", 19.

²⁶ See Idean Salehyan and Kristian Gleditsch, "Refugees and the spread of civil war", *International Organisations*, 60 (2) (2006), accessed 3 September 2014, DOI: S0020818306060103; Grace Atim, "The impact of refugees on Conflicts in Africa", accessed 14 September 2014, DOI: 2279-0837; Migueal Carreras, "Civil wars and criminality: The spill over of violence", *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology Theory*, 5 (2012): 838, accessed 3 September 2014, DOI: 1916-2782; David 1916-2782, in *International Spread of Ethnic Violence*, D. Lake and D. Rothchild (eds.), Princeton University Press (Princeton, 1998).

(subsequent) regional conflicts involving inter-governmental disputes. With regard to terrorist organisations, Midlarsky, Crenshaw and Yoshida²⁷ argue that a pattern of contagion also exists within the realm of international (and transnational) terrorism.²⁸ Napps and Ender find that Sub-Saharan Africa (which, in their study, includes Somalia) proved to be particularly vulnerable to the effects of contagion terrorism due to the presence of a number of weak central state authorities and significant population movements through poorly secured and porous borders.²⁹ These factors, specifically population movements, are exacerbated during times of conflict. As such, the spill over of terror activity from one country to another is what creates the transnational actor. It is clear in this instance that the violence began in one country and developed cross-border features driven by the consequences of the domestic conflict.

This very broad introduction into some of the current understandings of terrorism and conflict reveals at least one major debate within the literature. On the one hand, to engage in terrorist activity, and transnational terror, is a choice best suited to the overall objectives of the group, identified through a rational assessment of the costs and benefits of engaging in such acts. On the other hand, terrorism is largely the unintentional consequence of the environment in which an organisation operates, required for the survival of the organisation itself. The same holds true for transnational activity as, by corollary, transnational terrorism is also a method of violence, which has (in this instance) spread outside of the areas of the terrorist actor's primary operations.

However, in their critical review of the conceptualisation of a civil war, Mark Gersovitz and Norma Kriger³⁰ recognised the inherent cross-border dynamics operating within what have been classified as 'civil wars' *prior* to these spill-over effects. Gersovitz and Kriger argue that certain conflicts, defined as civil conflicts which adopt regional characteristics, were multi-national to begin with. Here, there is a need to distinguish between civil wars and regional war complexes; the latter of which emphasises the interdependence of larger-scale violence which exists prior to the outbreak of both domestic conflict and any subsequent regional conflicts.³¹

²⁷ Manus Midlarsky, Martha Crenshaw and Fumihiko Yoshida, "Why violence spreads: The contagion of international terrorism", *International Studies Quarterly* (1980): 262-298.

²⁸ Midlarsky, Crenshaw and Yoshida, "Why violence spreads", 263.

²⁹ Napps and Enders, "A regional investigation into the interrelationship of domestic and transnational terrorism", 13.

³⁰ Mark Gersovitz and Norma Kriger, "What is a civil war? A critical review of its definition and (economic) consequences", *The World Bank Research Observer*, 10 (2013).

³¹ Gersovitz and Kriger, "What is a civil war?" 16.

Gersovitz and Kriger identify the Horn of Africa (encompassing Somalia as well as Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan) as one of the main regional security complexes on the African continent.³² The inherent interconnectivity between these states facilitates not only the spread of conflict, but transnational terror as a method of violence within such conflict. The spread of transnational terrorism, from this perspective, is not due to the objectives of the actor, nor is it a product of shocks within the actor's domestic environment, but stems from these wider and entrenched regional dynamics which exist prior to the conflict at hand. Gersovitz and Kriger examine the intervention of a foreign actor as a key aspect in the spread of violence; this intervention is often motivated by prior regional dynamics.

1.2.1 Concluding review

From this overview, three distinct positions regarding the drivers of transnational terror are evident. Specifically, an actor's use of transnational activity can be explained as a product of choice through an actor-centric assessment of opportunities and constraints present in available avenues for the achievement of a particular objective. The use of transnational terror can also be explained as a product of the domestic environment, facilitated by refugee movements into neighbouring states. Finally, transnational activity can be driven by underlying interconnectivity between the states, beyond an actor's intention to conduct transnational attacks or developments contained within the actor's domestic environment which prompts the spread of violence. These three positions establish the format of this dissertation. The drivers of Al Shabaab's use of transnational terror can thus be conceptualised as a product of choice or a product of developments within Somalia which have ultimately led to the spill over of the conflict to surrounding states. Thirdly, Al Shabaab's use of transnational terror is driven by the regional war complex in the Horn of Africa.

1.3 The evaluation

This dissertation will evaluate each theory so as to ascertain which one offers the strongest explanation of the drivers of transnational terror. There are many criteria available through which to evaluate a theory. Cramer, for example, presents six criteria of a viable theory; these include, comprehensiveness, precision and testability, parsimony, empirical validity, heuristic value and applied value.³³ However, in his criticism of John Vasquez, Waltz states that a theory

³² Gersovitz and Kriger, "What is a civil war?" 19.

³³ Kenneth M Cramer, "Six criteria of a viable theory: Putting reversal theory to the test." *Journal of Motivation, Emotion, and Personality* 1, no. 1 (2013): 9-16.

depicts the essential elements, coupled with the requisite interdependent relations of a phenomenon.³⁴As such, the critical aspect of a theory is its assumptions which need to hold true, consistently, for the theory to meet the requirements of its purpose. Furthermore, Waltz states that it is within reality that we observe the phenomenon which a theory attempts to explain and as such it is observations within reality which will support a theory.³⁵ This reality-based support speaks to the empirical evidence of assumptions holding true. According to Waltz, a theory should not be a direct reflection of observable reality but serve to explain what is observed and hence, should bring clarity to what is observed.³⁶ In this regard, the law of parsimony states that a theory should provide the most viable and simple explanation of a case. Waltz provides a suitable framework for evaluating theory. If a theory's assumptions hold true for the case at hand, demonstrated through the observable empirical evidence and provides a suitable and concise explanation of the case, the theory presents a strong explanation of the case. In summary, the evaluation criteria for the aforementioned theories will be:

1. Key assumptions are maintained
2. The theory offers a parsimonious account of the case
3. The theory can be supported by at least three pieces of empirical evidence.

1.4 Chapter outline

A brief requisite context of Somalia is provided in Chapter 2, capturing significant developments following the fall of Siad Barre's regime in 1991. The rise of Al Shabaab is outlined from its infancy as the militant wing of the Union of Islamic Courts, to its independent operations and current regional activity. This chapter aims to provide the required content for tracing the process in the subsequent chapters, including domestic, regional and international developments. The first of the three theories to be tested is explored in Chapter 3. A brief introduction of Rational Choice Theory is included before the main assumptions of the theory are laid out. Al Shabaab's activities are then mapped out along this scenario, through a discussion of expectations and the reality revealed. This process is repeated in chapters 4 and 5, which deal with Spill-over and the Regional War Complex theories, respectively. Chapter 6 provides an evaluation of the three theories and highlights the limitations of the study with regards to conceptualising Al Shabaab as a transnational actor. In this concluding chapter, a

³⁴ Kenneth N Waltz. "Evaluating theories." *American Political Science Review* 91, no. 04 (1997): 913

³⁵ Waltz. "Evaluating theories." : 913

³⁶ Waltz. "Evaluating theories." : 914

brief outlook is addressed regarding the consequences for conceptualising Al Shabaab as a transnational actor, with specific reference to Kenya.

Chapter 2: Context

2.1 Introduction

In order to assess the drivers of Al Shabaab's transnational activity, it is necessary to have an understanding of the development of the group, the domestic context in which it operates and the wider regional dynamics that likely impact the group's agenda, intent, capabilities and opportunities to conduct transnational terror. This chapter will provide a snapshot of the relevant histories of Al Shabaab, Somalia and the Horn of Africa, in order to better inform the subsequent chapters.

2.2 A national context

2.2.1 The fall of Siad Barre

Somalia has been largely considered a failed state since the fall of Mohamed Siad Barre's regime in 1991. Barre had seized power in a bloodless coup in October 1969. From its inception, the Barre regime sought to suppress dissidence within Somali society while purportedly favouring the elite within Barre's own clan; his government came to be referred to as the M.O.D. regime, an acronym for the preference of the Marehan, Ogaden and Dhulbahante³⁷ clans under his regime.³⁸ By 1978, military leaders from the Majeerteen sub-clan launch a coup against Barre. Although unsuccessful, the coup attempt sparked a wider rebellion against the Somali government, and in 1979 Isaaq³⁹ diaspora based in Ethiopia formed the Somali National Movement (SNM) which sought to overthrow Barre. The SNM was able to muster a low-level insurgency against the government.

Prior to this, the Islamist group, Al Itihaad Al Islamiya⁴⁰ (AIAI), was formed in 1983 as a nationalist movement in opposition to the regime of Mohamed Said Barre.⁴¹ The group was funded by Salafi ideologists in the wider Gulf region and its top commanders had been foreign

³⁷ Although the author recognises alternative spellings, 'Marehan, Ogaden and Dhulbahante' have been selected for the purpose of this dissertation. These have been selected as they are among the most common spellings used in available English literature on the subject

³⁸ For an overview of clan dynamics in Somalia, see Appendix A

³⁹ Although the author recognises alternative spellings, 'Isaaq' has been selected for the purpose of this dissertation. This version has been selected as it is among the most common spellings used in available English literature on the subject

⁴⁰ Although the author recognises alternative spellings, 'Al Itihaad Al Islamiya' has been selected for the purpose of this dissertation. This version has been selected as it is among the most common spellings used in available English literature on the subject.

⁴¹ Roland Marchal, "A tentative assessment of the Somali Harakat Al-Shabaab", *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 3, no. 3 (2009): 383.

fighters in the conflict in Afghanistan (1979-1989).⁴² In AIAI's fight against rival armed clan-based factions operating in Somalia, it characterised itself as an avant-garde group seeking to transcend the clan-based divisions and develop a national Somali identity.

By 1987, a segment of the Ogaden clan broke from the government to launch its own opposition group, known as the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), and elders of the Hawiye clan formed the Somali National Alliance (SNA). In addition, Somali exiles from the Hawiye clan in Rome formed the United Somali Congress (USC) in 1989.⁴³ The insurgences prompted an increasingly violent response from the Somali government, targeting Hawiye and Isaaq civilian populations. By December 1990, the USC launched an assault on Mogadishu and was able to overrun Barre's regime, seizing control of the city on 27 January 1991.⁴⁴ Coinciding with Barre's overthrow, the SNM seized control of territory in the north west of the country, declaring the region the independent Republic of Somaliland.

Despite USC leader, Mohamed Farrah Aidid becoming interim leader, the separate opposition movements which had collectively sought to overthrow Barre were unable to transform their unified opposition against Barre into the reconstruction of the Somali state; soon, infighting brought chaos and anarchy to much of the country.⁴⁵ For the next two years, rival factions fought for control of Mogadishu.⁴⁶ The city was soon divided between competing warlords, including the notorious General Hussein Aidid⁴⁷ and Ali Mohamed Mahdi. Although the United Nations (UN) sent troops into the country in 1992 in an effort to quell the violence and restore governance in Somalia, it was to no avail.

⁴² Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): 20.

⁴³ "Somalia: Atrocities under Siad Barre", *Center for Justice and Accountability*, accessed 9 September 2015; <http://www.cja.org/article.php?list=type&type=287>

⁴⁴ Peter T Leeson, "Better off stateless: Somalia before and after government collapse", *Journal of Comparative Economics* 35, no. 4 (2007): 695.

⁴⁵ Apuuli Phillip Kasaija, "The UN-led Djibouti peace process for Somalia 2008-2009", *Somalia: State Collapse, Terrorism and Piracy*, ed. Brian Hesse (London: Routledge, 2013).

⁴⁶ Leeson, "Better off stateless: Somalia before and after government collapse," 695.

⁴⁷ Although the author recognises alternative spellings, 'Aidid' has been selected for the purpose of this dissertation. This version has been selected as it is among the most common spellings used in available English literature on the subject.

Between 1991 and 1992 the country was engaged in a civil war which, together with a famine, displaced millions of people into neighbouring countries.⁴⁸ The majority of refugees were received by Kenya. The civil war promoted a series of international interventions, namely the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) and the US-led Operation Restore Hope. Although UNOSOM II was launched in 1993, the worsening conflict with General Mohamed Farah Aidid resulted in the withdrawal of UN troops in the country (see section 2.4.2).

The two year civil war allowed for the spread of clan-based competition for both power and autonomy.⁴⁹ This was able to intensify in the absence of a central government. However, these warring parties were not unified and susceptible to factionalisation; this resulted in a devolution of warfare.⁵⁰ The civil war, through the proliferation of arms, also contributed greatly to the militarisation of society. In the absence of the central state, these faction militias became the providers of both security and political representation for Somali clans, but it was the emergence of AIAI that managed to transcend clan-dynamics and make use of a cross-cutting unifier of religion to garner support.

2.2.2 The rise of the Islamic courts

Despite AIAI's efforts, clan allegiances remained inherently strong within the organisation; these divisions, together with growing ideological differences, resulted in the splitting of the group in 1995.⁵¹ The group divided into three units, one of which crossed the border into Ethiopia, beginning a campaign against the Ethiopian government through a positive relationship with the Ethiopian separatist group, the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF).⁵² Of the two groups which remained in Somalia, the Al Itihaad, predominantly comprising members from the Darod⁵³ clan, established a base in the Gedo region. The group soon seized control of much of the region and set up an administrative pseudo-state. Al Itihaad remained focused on holding territory and worked to recruit members from small and rural

⁴⁸ Morten Skov Bendtsen, Toke Andersson Dalsgaard Nielsen, Rasmus Beck Noerbjerg Hansen and Klaus Stig Kristensen, "Conflict in Somalia: Conceptualising Al Shabaab", *Department of Culture and Identity, Roskilde University*, 2012: 20.

⁴⁹ Khadijah Sanusi Gumbi, "The effect of Somali armed conflict on the East African Sub-region", *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, no. 9 (4): 118.

⁵⁰ Vinci, "An analysis and comparison of armed groups in Somalia."; 78

⁵¹ Marchal, "A tentative assessment of the Somali Harakat Al-Shabaab", 383.

⁵² Bendtsen, Anderson *et al*, "Conflict in Somalia: Conceptualising Al Shabaab", 20.

⁵³ Although the author recognises alternative spellings, 'Darod' has been selected for the purpose of this dissertation. This version has been selected as it is among the most common spellings used in available English literature on the subject

communities, specifically targeting devout Muslim communities. However, the group was unable to hold on to a significant amount of territory in the region following the Ethiopian intervention in Somalia in 1996.⁵⁴

Soon Islamic courts were set up in constituencies under the influence of Al Itihaad and other cadres, as a means to offer governance and laws in the absence of the state. This system of governance was a well-received alternative to the inherently corrupt and often violent system of warlordism which had formed in the absence of state governance. Some commentators argue that the popular acceptance of the courts was founded in the fact that Sharia law offered one of the few remaining belief systems yet to be discredited within Somalia's political crisis.⁵⁵

The final group to have emerged from AIAI, Al I'tisan Kitab wal Sunnah⁵⁶ (Al I'tisan), was headed by Sheikh Hasan Daahir Aweys and comprised mainly Hawiye clan members, moving into Mogadishu and other southern cities. The group attempted to establish an Islamic court in Mogadishu. However, these attempts failed largely due to the division between northern Mogadishu, under the influence of Ali Mahdi Mohamed of the Muduulood clan, and the southern area under General Aidid of the Habar Gidir clan. The first fully functional court was set up by a sub-clan of the Hawiye, the Abgal, around 1997.⁵⁷ Overall, there were four primary Islamic courts which emerged: Hararyaale (Murosade), Shirkole (Saleebaan), Ifka Halane ('Ayr) and Warshahada 'Aanaha (Duduble).⁵⁸

Despite a number of peace agreements between 1991 and 2000, these did little to address insecurity in the country. In 2000 the Somalia National Peace Conference was held in Djibouti.⁵⁹ The conference produced the Transitional National Government (TNG), which sought to establish a power-sharing agreement between the warring Somali clans. At the same time, the Islamic courts had united to form the UIC. Following this arrangement, the Islamic

⁵⁴ Marchal, "A tentative assessment of the Somali Harakat Al-Shabaab", 384.

⁵⁵ Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012*; 23.

⁵⁶ Although the author recognises alternative spellings, 'Al I'tisan Kitab wal Sunnah' has been selected for the purpose of this dissertation. This version has been selected as it is among the most common spellings used in available English literature on the subject

⁵⁷ Oscar Gakuo Mwangi, "The Union of Islamic Courts and security governance in Somalia", *African Security Review* 19, no. 1 (2010): 89.

⁵⁸ Although the author recognises alternative spellings, these have been selected for the purpose of this dissertation as they are among the most common spellings used in available English literature on the subject.

⁵⁹ Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012*; 24 and 29.

courts began to maintain a precarious relationship between adhering to the clan system of governance and establishing Islamic law.

The TNG's influence was short lived and the administration was rapidly weakened by growing clan-based factionalism and infighting. In addition, the Somali Restoration and Reconciliation Council (SRRC) emerged as a key challenger to the TNG, with alleged support from the Ethiopian government. The TNG was viewed as having failed in its mission to establish peace between the rival clans, and a new reconciliation process was launched by the regional body, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), in October 2002. Held in Nairobi, Kenya, the IGAD-brokered initiative established a new administration, the TFG, in April 2004. Although recognised as the sovereign authority of Somalia, the TFG wielded little control in the country, and governed from Kenya between 2004 and 2005 before it was able to relocate to Baidoa, convening for the first time in Somalia in 2006.⁶⁰ However, the transitional body was inherently weak and provided little alternative to the previous warlord system.

Amid this governance vacuum, the UIC moved to reassert its influence in Mogadishu, despite the development of the TFG.⁶¹ The UIC received new support from the Hawiye clan, specifically from members of the Habar Gidir⁶² sub-clan, who felt alienated under the new TFG. President of the TNG, Abdiqasim Salad Hassan, belonged to the Habar Gidir sub-clan. His successor, Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, was of the Majeerteen clan.⁶³ Now, headed by the more militant Daahir Aweys, a former member of Al I'tisan, the UIC sought to create an armed wing within the group that would not be plagued by clan allegiances which had previously weakened the UIC.⁶⁴ The body was called Mu'askar Mahkamad, and was later renamed Jamaa'a Al Shabaab (Al Shabaab).⁶⁵ Aden Hashi 'Ayro was appointed commander of the wing. Much of the wing's leadership consisted of former Al I'tisan members who were largely sympathetic to global jihad ideologies.⁶⁶ Many of the leaders, including 'Ayro, also spent time in Afghanistan during the Soviet conflict as part of the AIAI, where they adopted an increasingly anti-US stance. This stance was fostered by similar sentiments towards US

⁶⁰ Mwangi, "The Union of Islamic Courts and security governance in Somalia", 81.

⁶¹ Marchal, "A tentative assessment of the Somali Harakat Al-Shabaab", 387.

⁶² Although the author recognises alternative spellings, this has been selected for the purpose of this dissertation as it is among the most common spellings used in available English literature on the subject.

⁶³ Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012*; 23.

⁶⁴ Marchal, "A tentative assessment of the Somali Harakat Al-Shabaab", 388.

⁶⁵ Although the author recognises alternative spellings, these have been selected for the purpose of this dissertation as they are among the most common spellings used in available English literature on the subject

⁶⁶ Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012*; 23.

political involvement in the Horn of Africa (see section 2.4.4).⁶⁷ Among these leaders were Mukhtar Robow (also known as Abu Mansoor, from the Leysan/Rahanweyn clan), Ahed Aw Abdi Godane (of the Ishaq/Dir clan), Ibraahim Al Afghani (also Ishaq) and Abu Qutaybah (from the Hawiye clan).⁶⁸

Following the failure of the TNG, and with the TFG's authority extending little beyond Baidoa, the UIC continued to fill the authority and security vacuum in several strategic areas in the country, including sectors of Mogadishu. By late 2005, there were at least 11 clan-based courts established in Mogadishu alone, offering a stark rivalry for secular warlords who also controlled parts of the city.⁶⁹ Towards the end of the same year, these warlords formed the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism (ARPCT). With the support of local Somali businessmen, the UIC captured control of Mogadishu from the ARPCT in June 2006.⁷⁰ Although sporadic fighting continued in the city for several weeks, the ARPCT was defeated by July.⁷¹

Al Shabaab made significant gains during the fight against the ARPCT. The group had established a means of securing independent military supplies, and garnered local support networks which were increasingly loyal to it, outside of UIC support.⁷² The main Mogadishu airport and seaport were reopened, government buildings were vacated, illegal land grabs were stopped and special courts were established to handle claims of restitution.⁷³ In addition, Al Shabaab's leaders were appointed to the UIC's Executive Council and the group gained standing within the UIC.

With the warlords pushed from Mogadishu, tensions between the UIC and the TFG worsened. The UIC's increasing influence and power in Mogadishu not only threatened the TFG in Baidoa, but unsettled its primary state backer, Ethiopia.⁷⁴ Despite an initial round of talks

⁶⁷ Marchal, "A tentative assessment of the Somali Harakat Al-Shabaab", 388.

⁶⁸ Although the author recognises alternative spellings, these have been selected for the purpose of this dissertation as they are among the most common spellings used in available English literature on the subject.

⁶⁹ Mwangi, "The Union of Islamic Courts and security governance in Somalia", 90.

⁷⁰ Eben Kaplan, "Somalia's High stakes power struggle", *Council on Foreign Relations*, (2006), accessed on 2 April 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/somalia/somalias-high-stakes-power-struggle/p11234>

⁷¹ Eben Kaplan, "Somalia's High stakes power struggle", *Council on Foreign Relations*, (2006), accessed on 2 April 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/somalia/somalias-high-stakes-power-struggle/p11234>

⁷² Marchal, "A tentative assessment of the Somali Harakat Al-Shabaab", 390.

⁷³ Cedric Barnes and Hassan Harun, "The rise and fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts", *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 1, no. 2 (2007): 154.

⁷⁴ Barnes and Harun, "The rise and fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts", 156.

between the two parties in June 2006, the TFG backed out of the second round scheduled for July due to asserted increased hostility by the UIC;⁷⁵ UIC rhetoric towards the TFG became increasingly critical and aggressive. The UIC adopted a stronger nationalist identity through its criticism and condemnation of the involvement of Ethiopia in Somalia's affairs, specifically as a backer of the TFG and the presence of Ethiopian troops in the country.

From Ethiopia's perspective, this resurgence of the UIC, specifically the role that former Al Itihaad member, Hasan Daahir Aweys⁷⁶, assumed in the UIC as leader of Al Shabaab, amounted to a reconstituted Al Itihaad controlling Mogadishu. For Ethiopia, such a development was a likely threat, as the group had past relations with ethnic insurgent groups such as the ONLF, and encouraged the radicalisation of Ethiopia's sizeable Muslim populations.⁷⁷ In December 2006, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1725 authorised the deployment of an AU peacekeeping mission in an effort to establish credible dialogue between the TFG and UIC.⁷⁸ The UIC had always been critical of the presence of foreign troops in Somalia, specifically Ethiopian troops, and the resolution was viewed as an attack on the UIC (see Section 2.3).⁷⁹

Yet, as much as the UIC sought to bring a national identity to Mogadishu, cracks were forming in the group's efforts to unite the continuum of political Islam, which ranged from moderate to extreme. Ideological friction worsened between the moderates, predominantly led by Sheik Sharif, and the radical wing led by Aweys; this friction was further bolstered by the prominent role of Al Shabaab, which was agitating for a more extreme interpretation of Islam. Different spokespersons of the UIC issued varying and contradictory responses to the TFG; however, Sheik Sharif stated that the UIC would not attack the TFG. Indicative of this, on 12 December 2006, Sheikh Yusuf Mohammed Siad (Sheik Indha'adde⁸⁰), then-chief of the military arm, together with Sheikh Mukhtar Robow issued a seven-day ultimatum to Ethiopia and the TFG

⁷⁵ Eben Kaplan, "Somalia's High stakes power struggle", *Council on Foreign Relations*, (2006), accessed on 2 April 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/somalia/somalias-high-stakes-power-struggle/p11234>

⁷⁶ Although the author recognises alternative spellings, this has been selected for the purpose of this dissertation as it is among the most common spellings used in available English literature on the subject.

⁷⁷ Barnes and Harun, "The rise and fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts", 155.

⁷⁸ "Security Council approves African protection, training mission in Somalia, Unanimously adopting Resolution 1725 (2006)", *United Nations Security Council*, 5579th meeting, accessed 2 April 2015; <http://www.un.org/press/en/2006/sc8887.doc.htm>

⁷⁹ Barnes and Harun, "The rise and fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts", 159.

⁸⁰ Although the author recognises alternative spellings, it has been selected for the purpose of this dissertation as it is among the most common spellings used in available English literature on the subject.

to remove foreign troops from Somalia or face attack.⁸¹ Indeed, after the expiration of the ultimatum, factions in the UIC engaged in combat with the Ethiopian troops and government militias in Baidoa. The UIC's military capacity did not match that of the combined Ethiopian and government forces, and by 28 December Ethiopian forces and the TFG had recaptured Mogadishu.⁸²

Following the defeat of the UIC, prominent clan elders, citizens and Somali diaspora participated in a National Reconciliation Conference convened by the TFG in Mogadishu between 15 July and 30 August 2007.⁸³ However, remnants of the now-defeated UIC held a separate meeting in Asmara, the capital of Eritrea – a purported backer of the UIC. These forces joined under a new banner, the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS), which was a political body aimed at challenging the TFG. However, Al Shabaab separated itself from the initiative. The autonomy and independent support networks which Al Shabaab had garnered during its successes for the UIC served the group well in establishing independent operations in Somalia. Although the group had dispersed following the Ethiopian intervention, key leaders, including 'Ayro and Aweys, conveyed a unified and consistent ideology and objective in periodically released audio recordings.⁸⁴ The group had adopted a nationalist standpoint, stating that the people of Somalia had a right to defend their country; this rhetoric was able to yield a degree of popular support given the ongoing presence of Ethiopian troops in the country.⁸⁵

In the absence of the provision of state security, the UIC was largely welcomed, with the quasi-state structures provided through the group's Islamic approach. The sharia courts were able to provide parallel state structures which stemmed from the Mosque, which included security provision and protection.⁸⁶ Furthermore, the UIC was able to capitalise on non-clan alliances. The UIC's success in Somalia was aided by the fact that the Somali governing body, in the form of TFG, had been located outside of the country, in Nairobi. This, coupled with AIAI splinter group, ONLF and subsequent Ethiopian hesitation towards a resurgence in the UIC

⁸¹ Mohamed Ibrahim, *The Geopolitical Implications of the Somali 'Islamic Courts' Activities in the Horn of Africa*, <http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/gtrec/files/2012/08/gtrec-proceedings-2008-05-mohamed-ibrahim.pdf>

⁸² Barnes and Harun, "The rise and fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts", 158 and 159.

⁸³ "Somali peace process", AMISOM, accessed 3 April 2015; <http://amisom-au.org/about-somalia/somali-peace-process/>

⁸⁴ Barnes and Harun, "The rise and fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts", 159.

⁸⁵ Barnes and Harun, "The rise and fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts", 159. Marchal, "A tentative assessment of the Somali Harakat Al-Shabaab", 395.

⁸⁶ Vinci, "An analysis and comparison of armed groups in Somalia.", 81

and role that former Al Itihaad member, Hasan Daahir Aweys amounted to the reconstituted Al Itihaad controlling Mogadishu. Yet the UIC was not without its own regional partnerships, given the alleged support from Asmara. It is even in this period that foreign interventions had given rise to a greater nationalist agenda from within the UIC's sub-units.

2.2.3 The rise of Al Shabaab

Following the defeat of the UIC by government and Ethiopian forces in 2006, Al Shabaab split from the UIC to form an independent insurgent group which continued to fight against the government, regional forces as well as other armed groups in Somalia. The split was largely attributed to growing ambitions within Al Shabaab's leadership, as well as resentment over the losses the group had accrued, relative to other UIC units, during the UIC defeat in 2006.⁸⁷ Al Shabaab was able to garner significant popular support. The invasion of Ethiopia, a state which had a protracted history of strained relations with Somalis, fuelled local resentment against 'foreigners', bolstering Al Shabaab's support base.⁸⁸ In addition, Al Shabaab's increasingly anti-TFG stance, juxtaposed to UIC willingness to enter talks, prompted significant backing from the Hawiye clan, which saw the Ethiopia-backed TFG as favouring the Majeerteen-Rahawin alliance.⁸⁹

In 2006 and 2007, Al Shabaab largely withdrew from conventional warfare, regrouping in the south of Somalia. Through an insurgent campaign comprising hit-and-run attacks, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), bombings and assassinations in the south, Al Shabaab stymied the southward advance of Ethiopian forces.⁹⁰ Although Al Shabaab appeared to be a marginal insurgent group and not a direct threat to the control of Mogadishu during this time, it displayed a unique *modus operandi*, by carrying out two suicide bombings in Baidoa. By August 2007, the frequency of Al Shabaab attacks increased significantly, and the group was thought to be responsible for up to 60 percent of all attacks in Mogadishu.⁹¹ In November 2007, the group was responsible for 55 percent of all attacks against TFG interests.

⁸⁷ Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012*; 47.

⁸⁸ Peter D. Little, "On the Somalia Dilemma: Adding layers of complexity to an already complex emergency", *African Studies Review*, 55, (2012): 192.

⁸⁹ Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012*; 31.

⁹⁰ Rob Wise, "Al Shabaab", *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 2011: 3.

⁹¹ Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012*; 44, 55 and 57.

Simultaneously, the group was able to take advantage of a more international profile; the leaders' AIAI history served them in gaining support from Al Qaeda (see Section 2.4.4). Al Qaeda had declared support for the group as early as July 2006.⁹² The group also sought to develop an online profile in late 2007, with the establishment of the Hegan and Kataaibi websites.

Between 2008 and 2009 Al Shabaab secured Baidoa, Mogadishu and Kismayo, and worked to establish sophisticated funding and recruitment networks. Not only was Al Shabaab able to pay recruits, often per attack, due to revenue generated through illegal taxation networks and the illicit trade of charcoal from the port of Kismayo; it was able to use the coinciding development of Islamic solidarity to garner support, including among the Somali diaspora.⁹³ The group also established an intricate intelligence unit, the Aminyat⁹⁴, which facilitated in the accurate capture of intelligence in order to plan more sophisticated attacks.⁹⁵

In response to the rise of Al Shabaab in the country, as well as the continued insecurity in Somalia, the African Union (AU) deployed a counterinsurgency operation, AMISOM, aimed at eradicating the group. Troops from Burundi, Djibouti, Kenya and Uganda were deployed to Somalia in March 2007.⁹⁶ In late 2008, the TFG had struck a deal with former UIC members, including future president Sheikh Sharif Ahmed. The deal helped the TFG to gain greater legitimacy, particularly among former UIC-supporting communities outside Mogadishu.⁹⁷ However, the TFG's authority still failed to extend beyond Mogadishu. The TFG's inability to provide security and state authority was furthered by Ethiopia's withdrawal in 2009.

⁹² Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012*; 44 and 57.

⁹³ In a study into radicalisation and Al Shabaab recruitment in Somalia, Anneli Botha and Mahdi Abdile of the Institute for Security Studies found that, of the 88 former Al Shabaab fighters interviewed, 39 percent stated that they had joined Al Shabaab for financial reasons, while 20 percent referred to the persecution of Muslims in Iraq and Palestine, the presence of infidels in Somalia and the protection of Islam as the key reasons for joining Al Shabaab. See: Botha, Anneli, and Mahdi Abdile. "Radicalisation and al-Shabaab recruitment in Somalia", *Institute for Security Studies Papers* 266 (2014).

⁹⁴ Although the author recognises alternative spellings, it has been selected for the purpose of this dissertation as it is among the most common spellings used in available English literature on the subject.

⁹⁵ Anneli Botha and Abdile Mahdi, "Radicalisation and al-Shabaab recruitment in Somalia", *Institute for Security Studies Papers* 266 (2014): 13.

⁹⁶ "Somali peace process", *AMISOM*, accessed 3 April 2015; <http://amisom-au.org/about-somalia/somali-peace-process/>

⁹⁷ Rob Wise, "Al Shabaab", *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 2011: 4.

The AMISOM operation was soon bolstered by the launch of the independently mandated ‘Operation Linda Nchi’ by the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) in October 2011.⁹⁸ These operations had significant successes against Al Shabaab, recapturing Mogadishu in 2011, Kismayo in 2012 and Barawa in 2014, and forcing the group further south. Al Shabaab moved to consolidate its presence in the Lower Shabelle, Bakool and Hiraaan regions; however, despite losing the territories, Al Shabaab has maintained a network of operatives in both Mogadishu and Kismayo.⁹⁹

International intervention in Somalia inadvertently assisting in bridging the gap between Islam and clan allegiances as a unifying feature of Al Shabaab, as illustrated by Ethiopia’s invasion and backing of the TFG, which was seen by the Hawiye clan as showing a preference towards the rival Majeerteen-Rahawin alliance. Furthermore, Al Shabaab was able to capitalise on its relationship with its international ally, Al Qaeda.

2.2.4 Al Shabaab today

Since its independence from the UIC, the group has aimed to overthrow the current Somali administration. This objective stems from strong opposition to the administration’s cooperation with Western governments and the asserted interference of neighbouring countries, specifically the presence of foreign troops in Somalia.¹⁰⁰ Throughout its insurgency in Somalia, Al Shabaab has maintained both a nationalist and Islamist ideology through its aims to overthrow the Ethiopia-backed TFG, replacing this with Sharia-based governance.¹⁰¹ However, the aligning of interests with Al Qaeda since 2006, and more formally since 2012,¹⁰² has served to bolster the group’s wider objectives. The group’s ideological rhetoric has portrayed the conflict in Somalia as a front in a global war against the West. Between 2008 and 2014, the lack of governance in southern Somalia continued to provide Al Shabaab with a safe haven. Although the group appears to be locked in a domestic conflict with AMISOM and FGS security forces

⁹⁸ Peter Woodward, *Crisis in the Horn of Africa: Politics, Piracy and the Threat of Terrorism* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013): 222.

⁹⁹ Although the author recognises alternative spellings for these regions, these have been selected for the purpose of this dissertation as they are among the most common spellings used in available English literature on the subject.

¹⁰⁰ Peter Woodward, *Crisis in the Horn of Africa: Politics, Piracy and the Threat of Terrorism*, 222.

¹⁰¹ Emmanuel Kisiangani, *Comparing Somalia’s al-Shabaab and Uganda’s Lord Resistance Party: A toxic mix of religion, politics, and violence*, (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2011): 1.

¹⁰² Former Al Shabaab leader, Ahmed Aw Abdi Godane, officially declared allegiance to Al Qaeda in an audio message posted on an Al Shabaab-affiliated website, and later circulated via social media. See, “Al Shabaab joining Al Qaeda”, *CNN News*, 10 February 2012, accessed 2 April 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/02/09/world/africa/somalia-shabaab-qaeda/index.html>

in Somalia, by having carried out terrorist attacks in Uganda, Kenya and Djibouti, Al Shabaab also became an Al Qaeda-aligned terrorist group.¹⁰³

The consolidation of this second identity coincided with a leadership crisis between 2011 and 2013. The late Ahmed Aw Abdi Godane, who had assumed leadership of Al Shabaab in 2008, had largely rejected Al Shabaab's nationalist goals, and is seen as the driver behind Al Shabaab's more formal allegiance with Al Qaeda.¹⁰⁴ Audio recordings released by Godane indicate a more global rhetoric, with an increased anti-US agenda, in line with then-Al Qaeda leader, Osama Bin Laden.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, Godane continued to reject the TFG, and later the FGS. Under Godane, Al Shabaab conducted two high-profile terrorist attacks, namely the 2010 Kampala bombings and the 2013 Westgate shopping mall siege in Nairobi.

Apart from directing Al Shabaab on a more global jihadist path, and orchestrating terrorist attacks outside of Somalia, Godane sought to centralise the group's leadership structure. Relations between the more pro-nationalist Sheikh Mukhtar Robow and Godane had soured from 2008. This dispute escalated in October 2010, when after a failed Ramadan offensive in Mogadishu, Robow withdrew his troops from the city, threatening to form a new faction.¹⁰⁶ Again, in July 2011, a dispute resulted in the withdrawal of troops from Baidoa. Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, leader of the Hizbul Islam affiliate, was also at loggerheads with Godane over Al Shabaab attacks against Hizbul Islam-held territory. Under mounting pressure from AMISOM and TFG troops in Mogadishu, Al Shabaab was forced to withdraw its forces from Mogadishu in August 2011.¹⁰⁷ Robow heavily criticised Godane for the loss of the capital, against which Al Shabaab had launched an assault a year prior. A number of additional Al Shabaab leaders also denounced Godane's rule between 2012 and 2013. By mid-2013, however, divisions in the group's leadership had worsened and some leaders began agitating for Godane's removal.¹⁰⁸ In June 2013, Godane loyalists moved against dissidents; Ibrahim Al Afghani and Ma'alim Burhan were assassinated in Barawa. Following the killing of Godane's adversaries in 2013, both Robow and Aweys fled to Lower Shabelle, amid reports that both

¹⁰³ Rob Wise, "Al Shabaab", *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 2011: 2-6.

¹⁰⁴ Nathaniel Horadam, "Profile: Ahmed Abdi Godane (Mukhtar Abu Zubair)", *Critical Threats*, 14 November 2011; <http://www.criticalthreats.org/somalia/al-shabaab-leadership/ahmed-abdi-godane-mukhtar-abu-zubair-november-14-2011>

¹⁰⁵ Horadam, "Profile: Ahmed Abdi Godane (Mukhtar Abu Zubair)"

¹⁰⁶ Horadam, "Profile: Ahmed Abdi Godane (Mukhtar Abu Zubair)"

¹⁰⁷ Matthew Bryden, "The Reinvention of Al Shabaab: A strategy of choice or necessity", *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, (2014): 3.

¹⁰⁸ Bryden, "The Reinvention of Al Shabaab: A strategy of choice or necessity", 5.

men had defected to the Somali government.¹⁰⁹ Godane replaced Robow and Ibrahim Al Afghani with close ally, Mahad Warsame Qaley Karate, and suspended the group's executive council.¹¹⁰ This ultimately rid Al Shabaab of Godane's adversaries and served to rally the group under Godane.

Godane was subsequently killed in a US-led drone strike in an Al Shabaab stronghold in Somalia's Lower Shabelle region on 1 September 2014. Al Shabaab confirmed his death in a statement on 6 September, naming Sheikh Ahmad Umar Abu Ubaidah as his successor. Ahmad Umar is understood to have worked closely with Godane. The group's decision to reiterate its commitment to Al Qaeda during the 6 September 2014 statement likely indicates that its immediate orientation under Umar will unlikely shift in ideology or objectives.¹¹¹

Following Al Shabaab's leadership change in 2008, the group consolidated a dual agenda comprising nationalist goals and participation in the *global jihad* off the back of a growing relationship with Al Qaeda.

2.3 A regional context

2.3.1 The Ogaden War and Ethiopia's role in Somalia

The 1977 Somali invasion of Ethiopia served to cement complex and somewhat hostile relations between the two countries, which had been adversaries throughout much of modern history. The invasion sparked the Ogaden War, which would come to cement Somalia as an aggressor in the region and served to largely legitimise subsequent Ethiopian intervention in Somali affairs. While the roots of the conflict can be traced back to the 15th century, prior to the 1977 invasion, three past legacies were key drivers of the conflict. These were the borders created during European colonial rule, the legacy of Somalian irredentism, and interventions by the two super powers in the wider Cold War context.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Horadam, "Profile: Ahmed Abdi Godane (Mukhtar Abu Zubair)"

¹¹⁰ Bryden, "The Reinvention of Al Shabaab: A strategy of choice or necessity", 4.

¹¹¹ Gabrielle Reid, "Killing of al-Shabaab Leader Throws Future of Militant Group into Question", *Global Observatory*, 19 September 2014, accessible <http://theglobalobservatory.org/2014/09/killing-al-shabaab-leader-future-militant-group/>

¹¹² Joseph K. Nkaissery, "The Ogaden War: An Analysis of its Causes and its Impact on Regional Peace on the Horn of Africa", *USAWC Research Strategy Project*, 1997: 2-3.

Both Ethiopia and Somalia have laid claim to the Ogaden region, which extends down from Ethiopia's southern highlands.¹¹³ The region had long been occupied by Somali nomads. However, under Emperor Menelik II, Ethiopia began to increasingly lay territorial claim to the region from the 1890s, and from the 1930s under Emperor Haile Selassie, conflicting claims of authority over the territory were further complicated by the transfer of the region between Ethiopian- and Italian-administered areas.¹¹⁴ The British reoccupied the territory in 1941 in an effort to unify administration in the Horn, excluding French-controlled Djibouti. Yet, cautious of an independent Somali state that could include the Ogaden, Selassie again claimed the region as part of Ethiopia and officially secured the region in 1948.¹¹⁵

British-administered Somaliland and Italian Somaliland united to form an independent Republic of Somalia on 1 July 1960. Since gaining independence, Somalia had adopted a foreign policy aimed at reuniting territory and populations believed to be under foreign control, namely the Ogaden region in Ethiopia, Djibouti, and the Northern Frontier District extending into Kenya.¹¹⁶ Somalia refused to recognise any pre-independence treaties defining the Somalia-Ethiopia border and a number of skirmishes were reported along the ill-defined border in late 1960. Post-independent Somalia came to prioritise the reunification of all areas populated by Somalis.¹¹⁷ Efforts by the Ethiopian imperial regime prior to the end of the Derg regime in 1974 prioritised increasing the influence of pro-Ethiopian groups and individuals in Mogadishu in order to contain Somali irredentism.¹¹⁸ Yet the resultant power vacuum in Ethiopia following the overthrow of the Derg regime offered an opportunity to intensify the irredentism agenda under Siad Barre and challenge Ethiopia's dominance in the Horn of Africa. The Somali government lent its support to the pro-Somali Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) in the Ogaden region.¹¹⁹ Despite initial successes, capturing 60 percent of the Ogaden territory between 1977 and 1978, the Somali armed forces were defeated and a truce was declared in March 1978. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the war, both the Mogadishu and

¹¹³ Napoleon A. Bamfo, "Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia in 2006: Motives and lessons learned", *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 2010: 56.

¹¹⁴ Bamfo, "Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia in 2006", 56.

¹¹⁵ Bamfo, "Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia in 2006", 56.

¹¹⁶ Joseph Nkaissery, "The Ogaden War: An Analysis of its Causes and its Impact on Regional Peace on the Horn of Africa", 9.

¹¹⁷ Bamfo, "Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia in 2006", 56.

¹¹⁸ Belete Belachew Yihun, "Ethiopian foreign policy and the Ogaden War: the shift from 'containment' to destabilisation 1977-1991", *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 8, (2014): 678.

¹¹⁹ Bamfo, "Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia in 2006", 60.

Addis Ababa administrations would go on to support their rival's adversaries until the overthrow of Siad Barre's regime in 1991.

In the post-Barre era, Ethiopia remained attuned with developments in Somalia and became increasingly wary of the rise of the Islamic Courts, given its links to Al Itihaad and associated risks to security in Ethiopia. Ethiopia engaged in sporadic attacks within Somali territory. By 1999, faction leaders, including Ali Mahdi and Hussein Aidid, issued a joint statement to the UN Security Council and the then-Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to intervene in response to continued reports of cross-border attacks by Ethiopian troops.¹²⁰ Ethiopia swung its support behind the TFG, headed by known Ethiopia ally, Abdullah Yusuf Ahmed.¹²¹ As the TFG's limited authority became increasingly challenged domestically, the Ethiopian parliament passed a resolution in November 2006 which allowed the government to take all necessary steps to ward off attacks by the Islamic Council in Somalia, allowing for an invasion by Ethiopian troops.¹²² While tensions between Ethiopia, Somalia and groups within the Ogaden region contributed substantially to regional power dynamics in the Horn of Africa, the coinciding creation of the 'Global War on Terror' presented Ethiopia with a renewed opportunity to cement its dominance against Somalia.¹²³

Ultimately, the Ogaden war had legitimised Ethiopia's subsequent interventionary action against its perceived aggressor. However, these regional dynamics also developed in a corresponding dynamic regarding the relationship between former Al Itihaad member, Hasan Daahir Aweys, the UIC and Al Shabaab.

2.3.2 Kenya's intervention in Somalia

The launch of Operation Linda Nchi in October 2011 marked Kenya's independent involvement in the Somalia conflict. The initial mandate of the operation was to establish a security zone in southern Somalia and capture the port city of Kismayo, a strategically valuable Al Shabaab stronghold.¹²⁴ Although often discussed as a near-gut response to a series of cross-

¹²⁰ Bamfo, "Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia in 2006", 58 and "World: Africa Somalis unite against Ethiopia", *BBC World News*, 11 April 1999; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/316850.stm>

¹²¹ Bamfo, "Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia in 2006", 59.

¹²² Bamfo, "Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia in 2006", 59.

¹²³ Debora Valentina Malito, "Building terror while fighting enemies: how the Global War on Terror deepened the crisis in Somalia", *Third World Quarterly* (2015): 36, 1867.

¹²⁴ David M. Anderson and Jacob McKnight, "Kenya at war: Al Shabaab and its enemies in Eastern Africa", *African Affairs*, 114 (2014): 1.

border attacks and kidnappings by Al Shabaab militants in 2010 within Kenyan territory, Kenya had been threatening to enter Somalia as early as 2009, with Kenyan Foreign Minister, Moses Masika Wetangula, seeking US support for an invasion plan, although this was rebuffed. Nevertheless, the KDF entered Somalia on 16 October 2011. The mission was largely motivated by the chronic refugee crisis in Garissa County, which was increasingly perceived as a security concern; Ethiopian and Ugandan concerns (following the Kampala bombings) were driving regional anxieties over terrorism and security and the associated threat to Kenya's tourism economy, with border insecurity impacting the public perception over the safety of popular destinations such as Lamu Island. Although initially constructed as an invasion plan, the KDF soon occupied captured territory in Somalia in the absence of Somali state authorities, who were thus unable to hand over control. By November 2011, Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and FSG President Sheikh Sharif Ahmed declared that they would tackle the regional security threat, conceptualised in Al Shabaab, in a unified effort. In June 2012, the KDF contingent became a formal part of AMISOM.¹²⁵

In August 2012, the KDF contingent moved on Kismayo. The strategic port city served as an important part of Al Shabaab's revenue sources; illegal trade and taxation networks for sugar, cement and manufactured goods as well as the illicit charcoal trade through the port generating a reported USD 25 million in yearly revenue.¹²⁶ The KDF secured the port in September 2012. However, the loss did not spell the demise of Al Shabaab, which had already regrouped in Jubaland. Al Shabaab attacks increased in southern Somalia; the group became increasingly engaged in guerrilla tactics, as its post-Kismayo dispersion prevented more conventional fighting. The loss of the port did not lead to a cessation of Al Shabaab's revenue, although this was reduced. A report by the UN Monitoring Group in Somalia in 2013 indicated that illegal trade continued through the port, linked to rent-seeking practices by KDF soldiers.¹²⁷

Ultimately, however, Operation Linda Nchi cemented Kenya as an independent interventionary force in Somalia.

¹²⁵ Anderson and McKnight, "Kenya at war: Al Shabaab and its enemies in Eastern Africa," 4-6.

¹²⁶ Anderson and McKnight, "Kenya at war: Al Shabaab and its enemies in Eastern Africa", 5-8.

¹²⁷ See letter dated 24 July 2013 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council, available at http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2013_440.pdf

2.3.4 Al Shabaab's transnational activity

Al Shabaab orchestrated its first transnational terrorist attack outside of Somalia on 11 July 2010, when 76 people were killed in multiple suicide bombings in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda. The group claimed that the attacks were in retaliation for the deployment of Ugandan peacekeeping troops in Somalia as part of AMISOM. Although this was the first high-profile attack, Al Shabaab had previously been linked to attacks in Ethiopia's Ogaden region. Between 2010 and 2012, the group also engaged in isolated attacks along the shared border with Kenya; specifically in the vicinity of the Dadaab refugee camp. In addition, Al Shabaab militants carried out four kidnappings in the Dadaab refugee camp and in Lamu County, in Kenya, close to the border with Somalia in 2010.

On 16 October 2011, Kenyan authorities launched the independent intervention in Somalia by the KDF, Operation Linda Nchi. The operation flagged Kenya as a direct adversary of the group, with Al Shabaab publically threatening to attack Kenyan interests in response. Within days of the launch of the operation, grenade and IED blasts were reported in Garissa. A grenade attack at a bar in Nairobi came two days after the launch of Operation Linda Nchi.¹²⁸ From October 2011 into 2012, Kenya experienced an uptick in low-level attacks, including grenade attacks and IED blasts, as well as attacks on police checkpoints in the border counties of Mandera, Wajir, Garissa and Lamu. Small-scale bombings and grenade attacks also took place in Nairobi and Mombasa, many of which were attributed to Al Shabaab militants and (domestic) sympathisers.¹²⁹

Since the launch of the operation and the game-changing attack against the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi's affluent Westlands suburb in September 2013, which demonstrated the group's intent and operational capacity to conduct sophisticated mass-casualty attacks outside of Somalia, attacks continued to be reported in Kenya, specifically in the Wajir, Garissa and Lamu counties, as well as in Nairobi and Mombasa. According to the Global Terrorism database (GTD), over 200 recorded Al Shabaab incidents were reported in Kenya since the launch of Operation Linda Nchi, between October 2011 and 31 December 2014.¹³⁰ In the most recent high-profile attack on 21 April 2015, Al Shabaab militants laid siege to the Garissa

¹²⁸ Anderson and McKnight, "Kenya at war: Al Shabaab and its enemies in Eastern Africa", 15.

¹²⁹ The Global Terrorism Database (GTD), National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), a subsidiary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security at the University of Maryland.

¹³⁰ The Global Terrorism Database (GTD), National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), a subsidiary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security at the University of Maryland.

University College campus in Garissa town, Garissa County; 147 students were killed and 79 injured during the assault.¹³¹ The siege ended following the deployment of the Kenya Special Forces; four of the perpetrators were killed in the ensuing security operation.

Al Shabaab also claimed responsibility for the 24 May 2014 bombing of La Chaumiere restaurant in Djibouti City, in which a Turkish national was killed. However, Al Shabaab activity in Ethiopia has been less prominent. Although the group claimed responsibility for a failed bombing in Addis Ababa in October 2013, the incident proved peculiar.¹³² Al Shabaab claimed responsibility for the failed attack via social media the following day, after Ethiopian authorities claimed that the perpetrators, who were killed in the attack, were Somali nationals. However, some commentators have purported that the government's claim of Al Shabaab involvement was a ploy to crack down on domestic dissident groups, including the ONLF.¹³³ Nevertheless, government agencies, including the US Embassy in Addis Ababa, have issued several alerts warning of possible Al Shabaab attacks in the country on a number of occasions, with Al Shabaab making continuous threats to attack Ethiopian interests in response to the Ethiopian military intervention in Somalia.

Although the group has orchestrated high-profile attacks in Kenya, Djibouti and Uganda, the majority of attacks have comprised raids on local villages along Kenya's border with Somalia. Between 2012 and 2013, the majority of attacks took place in the former North Eastern province, specifically in the northern Mandera County. From 2013, sporadic attacks were reported further south in the province as well as in Nairobi, and Coast province. While there was a heavy presence of Al Shabaab activity recorded in Nairobi in 2013, this shifted to the Coast province between 2014 and 2015.¹³⁴ These areas recently targeted by Al Shabaab have historically consisted of marginalised populations. In addition, recent Al Shabaab attacks within Kenya between June 2014 and December 2015 have been characterised by the specific

¹³¹ Kenya university death toll seen rising; anger over security failures", *Reuters*, 3 April 2015; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-kenya-security-college-idUSKBN0MT0CK20150403>

¹³² Jacey Fortin, "Is Ethiopia on Al Shabaab's hit list?", *Al Jazeera*, 21 October 2013, accessed 1 September 2014 at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/10/ethiopia-al-shabab-hit-list-201310211211366477.html>

¹³³ Jacey Fortin, "Is Ethiopia on Al Shabaab's hit list?", *Al Jazeera*, 21 October 2013, accessed 1 September 2014 at <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/10/ethiopia-al-shabab-hit-list-201310211211366477.html>

¹³⁴ "Al Shabaab Activities in Kenya; Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED)", <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/al-shabaab-in-kenya-august-2015-update/>

targeting of civilians perceived to be outsiders to the community.¹³⁵ Reports of the June 2014 Mpeketoni attacks, in which 48 people were killed, as well as the December 2014 attack against a quarry in Mandera and the April 2015 attack against Garissa University College, all contain evidence that militants specifically targeted non-Muslims after attempting to identify and distinguish between Muslim and non-Muslim victims.¹³⁶ It is likely that Al Shabaab has begun to capitalise on Kenya's religious and ethnic divisions in a distinct shift from earlier low-level and indiscriminate attacks witnessed between 2012 and 2013. This likely indicates an acute awareness of the domestic and local dynamics within Kenya. Furthermore, reports between May and July 2015 illustrated that Al Shabaab militants had seized territory in Kenya's Lamu County.¹³⁷

It is clear that the protracted crisis in Somalia has allowed Al Shabaab to thrive domestically. The group was initially able to piggy-back on the legitimacy of the UIC before gaining its own nationalist reputation and associated support against Ethiopian intervention and the foreign presence in the country. However, it was also able to take advantage of residual public sentiments derived from the Ogaden War and problematic relations with Ethiopia. Somalia has long been an arena for foreign intervention, from the Cold War dynamics during the Ogaden conflict to the role of the US in the post-9/11 era. While this has played into Al Shabaab's nationalist agenda, it has also involved a multitude of players in the latest conflict against the group, which lies far beyond Somalia's borders.

Furthermore, Al Shabaab has faced internal challenges stemming from a competition for leadership, which was particularly acute under Godane. This has likely led to more risky behaviour, with Godane seeking to consolidate his power through an emboldened Al Shabaab, piggy-backing on the global reputation of Al Qaeda. If one assumes that terrorism is a 'force-multiplying' strategy, then an internally divided and relatively weak group, in terms of conventional warfare, facing well-equipped enemies in Somalia is likely to adopt terrorist

¹³⁵ "Al Shabaab Activities in Kenya; Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED)", <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/al-shabaab-in-kenya-august-2015-update/>

¹³⁶ See: "Kenya attack: Mpeketoni near Lamu hit by al-Shabab raid", *BBC News*, 16 June 2014; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-27862510>; "Al-Shabab massacres non-Muslims at Kenya quarry", *BBC News*, 2 December 2014; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30288137> and "Kenya university death toll seen rising; anger over security failures", *Reuters*, 3 April 2015; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-kenya-security-college-idUSKBN0MT0CK20150403>

¹³⁷ "Al Shabaab Activities in Kenya; Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED)", <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/al-shabaab-in-kenya-august-2015-update/>

tactics. The ability to conduct transnational attacks will serve to further this effect, particularly when attempting to combat intervening foreign forces.

2.4 An international context

2.4.2 The role of the US

The Horn of Africa has emerged as a strategic location for global powers since World War II. The US in particular had a keen interest in Ethiopia and established the Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement (MDAA) with Ethiopia in 1953.¹³⁸ Yet during the Cold War, Ethiopia and Somalia became important pawns in the broader geopolitical conflict, demonstrated by the initial Soviet provision of military and technical support to Somalia under Barre, while the US bolstered Ethiopia's military expertise in accordance with the MDAA. However, with Barre ending the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union, these proxies changed sides during the Ogaden conflict.

Although US involvement in the Horn of Africa has been influential since the Cold War proxy war dynamics within the Ogaden War, the US relationship with Al Shabaab was ultimately driven following the end of the Cold War and the subsequent foreign policy focus on combating *global jihad*. The US established a military base in neighbouring Djibouti as part of its East African Counterterrorism Initiative.¹³⁹ With the coinciding rise of the UIC in Somalia in the early 1990s, the US faced a perceived increase in the threat of Islamist radicalism on its African frontline and subsequently threw its support behind the ARPCT. As the ARPCT comprised former warlords, this move was increasingly detrimental to the US reputation in Somalia.¹⁴⁰ The withdrawal of the US Operation Restore Hope generated further mistrust among the Somali population regarding the motives for US involvement in Somalia. The failure of UN-US humanitarian intervention in the mid-1990s came to influence US foreign policy towards the country and the US adopted an increasingly risk-averse approach. Yet the 1998 bombings of the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam marked a turning point in the US conceptualisation of Somalia as an Al Qaeda safe haven, after it was discovered that those responsible for the bombings had resided in Somalia. The US stepped up its counterterrorism operations in the country and in the renewed 'war on terror' era after the 9/11 attacks in the US

¹³⁸ Jeffrey Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn: US security policy in Ethiopia and Somalia, 1953–1991*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992.

¹³⁹ Mohamed Ibrahim, "Somalia and global terrorism: A growing connection?", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 28, (2010): 285.

¹⁴⁰ Ibrahim, "Somalia and global terrorism: A growing connection?", 287.

in 2001, Somalia remained a key battlefield. As part of the US ‘Operation Enduring Freedom’ in the Horn of Africa, the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa was established at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti in December 2002.¹⁴¹

US and Ethiopian cooperation between 2001 and 2010 bolstered Ethiopian intervention in Somalia amid a ‘glocal’ counterterrorism strategy (prioritising global and regional operations), which aimed to fight international terrorism in the Horn of Africa. Both regional and global actors were engaged in disrupting and dismantling alleged material and political bases linked to Al Qaeda, specifically involving Ethiopian troops on the ground and US technologies for surveillance and warfare.¹⁴² The US linked state failure with the proliferation of terrorism in the post-9/11 era and, by corollary, sought state building strategies within its counterterrorism objectives in Somalia, throwing its support behind the TFG and subsequent FGS, retaining its risk-adverse approach to Somalia.

2.4.3 Other foreign actors

The UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM 1) was established in April 1992 in response to the worsening humanitarian crisis in Somalia. UNOSOM was primarily a humanitarian mission but faced increased security challenges. As the situation began to deteriorate, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 794, which provided for the creation of the US-led Unified Task Force (UNITAF) to assist with the safe delivery of humanitarian aid. UNITAF troops were deployed to Mogadishu and later to central Somalia.¹⁴³ Yet insecurity remained a significant concern, prompting the passing of Resolution 873 and the creation of UNOSOM II. Resolution 873 acted upon Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which provides for the use of force to maintain or restore peace and security.¹⁴⁴ UNOSOM was in operation in Somalia between March 1993 and March 1995. UNOSOM II ended following the passing of UN Resolution 954; the mission marked the first time that the UN had withdrawn from a country without achieving its mandate. However, since May 2013, the UN has maintained the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) in an effort to support the consolidation of the Federal Government of Somalia as well as to support AMISOM peacekeeping missions.

¹⁴¹ Malito, “Building terror while fighting enemies”, 1867.

¹⁴² Malito, “Building terror while fighting enemies”, 1870.

¹⁴³ “Somalia – UNOSOM 1”, *United Nations*, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unosom1backgr2.html>

¹⁴⁴ ‘Chapter VII: “Action with respect to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression”, *United Nations Charter*; <http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-vii/index.html>

AMISOM was established in January 2007, replacing the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Peace Support Mission to Somalia (IGASOM), which had failed to get off the ground since 2005. Although initially mandated for six months, the operation was extended by the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2182 in 2014, until November 2015. The mission was mandated to take all necessary action “to carry out support for dialogue and reconciliation by assisting with free movement, safe passage and protection of all those involved in a national reconciliation congress involving all stakeholders, including political leaders, clan leaders, religious leaders and representatives of civil society”.¹⁴⁵

The region is of strategic value to global powers, owing largely to its geographical importance as the gate to the Gulf of Suez and Suez Canal. As such, global powers, and specifically the US in this regard, have had protracted involvement in the region. Yet, the latest involvement comes amid the context of the global ‘war on terror’ and, given the view that an ungoverned Somalia provided a safe haven for transnational and international terrorist groups, the global war on terror promoted renewed efforts to back a governmental force in the country. In the absence of consolidated and able state security provision, these interventionary bodies have become part of the latest players competing to provide the functions of the absent state.

2.4.4 The role of international Islamists

The 1998 US embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, and the subsequent link to Al Qaeda logistical bases in Somalia, cemented Somalia as part of the international terror network.¹⁴⁶ Al Qaeda’s connections with Somalia can be traced back to the relationship with leadership within AIAI. Funded by Salafi ideologists in the wider Gulf region, AIAI’s top commanders had been foreign fighters in the conflict in Afghanistan (1979-1989).¹⁴⁷ This instilled an inherent anti-US stance which would come to sit well with Al Qaeda allies, particularly in light of US involvement in the Horn of Africa. The relationship between Al Qaeda and AIAI continued after the US withdrawal from Somalia in the early 1990s.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ See AMISOM’s official mandate; <http://amisom-au.org/amisom-mandate/>

¹⁴⁶ Roland Marchal "Warlordism and terrorism: how to obscure an already confusing crisis? The case of Somalia." *International Affairs* 83, no. 6 (2007): 1102

¹⁴⁷ Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): 20.

¹⁴⁸ Agbiboa, “Shifting the battleground: The transformation of Al Shabaab and the growing influence of Al Qaeda in East Africa and the Horn”, 185.

Nevertheless, in Al Qaeda's bid to unify Islamist groups within its global network in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Al Qaeda drew on Takfiri ideologies¹⁴⁹, which provided for the targeting of apostate governments as well as stressed the need for both the amalgamation of militant groups and the targeting of global enemies, specifically, the US and the West.¹⁵⁰ This rhetoric provided for the targeting of both local and global enemies and as such, affiliates did not have to abandon their domestic agenda.¹⁵¹ Consequently, through their alliance with Al Qaeda, Al Shabaab capitalise on an international profile while maintaining their insurgency against the FGS and foreign forces within Somalia.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ For a more indepth analysis of Islamist positions and ideologies, see, Jeffrey Haynes (2005) *Islamic Militancy in East Africa*, *Third World Quarterly*, 26:8, 1321-1339

¹⁵⁰ Agbiboa, "Shifting the battleground: The transformation of Al Shabaab and the growing influence of Al Qaeda in East Africa and the Horn", : 183

¹⁵¹ Agbiboa, "Shifting the battleground: The transformation of Al Shabaab and the growing influence of Al Qaeda in East Africa and the Horn", : 185

¹⁵² Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012*; 44 and 57.

Chapter 3: Rational Choice Theory

3.1 Introduction

According to Rational Choice Theory, which assumes that actors are rational beings, actors have preferences based on their estimated objectives, each yielding different outcomes which can have greater or lesser benefits for the actor.¹⁵³ As such, all complex social phenomena, including transnational terrorism, can be explained in terms of the individual actions of which these phenomena are made.¹⁵⁴ In this regard, an actor makes the choice to engage in cross-border terrorism.

3.2 The theory

The theory models social interaction on economic action, where actors are motivated by the profit offered by a specific action relative to the possible losses accrued. Each actor is self-motivated.¹⁵⁵ Following an assessment of the costs and benefits of these possible outcomes, an actor makes a rational decision and will select the path that results in the most beneficial outcome with the fewest possible losses.¹⁵⁶ For some rational theorists, this is based on the premise that rationality is a product of the human psyche, while others purport that it is simply necessary to assume rationality when seeking to explain social phenomena. All social phenomena or interactions are thus reducible to a rational individual actor's actions.¹⁵⁷ The theory also incorporates collective action, by assuming that the actions of groups can be equated to the actions of individuals and that they are determined by the same cost/benefit assessment. A group is thus understood to act as a single entity.

Rational Choice Theory, when applied to terrorism, characterises terrorists or terrorist organisations as rational actors which seek to maximise benefits subject to their capabilities as well as to reduce possible losses.¹⁵⁸ The same holds true for the choice to engage in

¹⁵³ Adlini Ilma Ghaisany Sjah, "Tracing Al Shabaab's decision to cooperate with Al Qaeda in Somalia (2008)", *Journal of Terrorism Research*, 5(1): 2008: 2.

¹⁵⁴ John Scott, "Rational choice theory", *Understanding contemporary society: Theories of the present*, 129 (2000): 127.

¹⁵⁵ Dipak K. Gupta, *Understanding Terrorism and Political Violence: The life cycle of birth, growth, transformation, and demise*. (London: Routledge, 2008).

¹⁵⁶ Peter Abell, *Rational Choice Theory*, (Aldershot: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, 1991): 76.

¹⁵⁷ John Scott, "Rational choice theory", *Understanding contemporary society: Theories of the present*, 129 (2000): 128.

¹⁵⁸ Todd Sandler and Walter Enders, "An economic perspective on transnational terrorism", *European Journal of Political Economy*, 20 (2004): 311 and John Scott, "Rational choice theory", *Understanding contemporary society: Theories of the present*, 129 (2000): 126.

transnational terrorism. This is based on the assumption that a terrorist organisation has an internalised set of consistent values and beliefs which determine its objectives.¹⁵⁹ These values and beliefs are stable. The actor must therefore choose between non-terrorist and terrorist activities, while being constrained by their respective resources and assessing possible losses caused by engaging in terrorist activity and, by corollary, conducting cross-border attacks.¹⁶⁰ Here, the choice to engage in transnational terrorism is conceptualised as a logical means to achieve the group's political objectives.

For Martha Crenshaw, the use of terrorist tactics by a specific actor is based on a rational *choice* to do so.¹⁶¹ Crenshaw purports that violence directed towards the state, in the form of a terrorist act, is conducted for the purpose of political change, whereby the act of terrorism is used to communicate a political message. The preconditions which lead to a terrorist attack are not the short-term precipitants which facilitate the attack itself, such as determining the target selection and timing of a single attack, but rather the longer-term dynamics which create the desire to seek political change and make use of terrorism as the method of violence to do so. As such, the direct causes of terrorism are the factors which positively encourage resistance to the state and make terrorism a viable method to achieve this. These include:

1. The existence of grievances among an identifiable subgroup of a larger population.
2. A lack of opportunity for political participation to address these grievances.
3. A dissatisfied group within the elite, which is able to make use of these grievances within the subgroup to perpetuate its own relevance and cause.¹⁶²

Where these preconditions exist, terrorism becomes an attractive strategy for groups or actors of differing ideological standpoints to challenge the state's authority. However, these conditions do not address the *choice* to engage in transnational terrorism, as they depict a clear relationship between state and non-state actors, leaving very little room for a third state actor.

Crenshaw elaborates that actors which choose to engage in terrorism can be divided into categories depending on their objectives. Actors can be revolutionary in that they seek to overthrow a government, nationalist in that they seek to achieve the withdrawal of foreign

¹⁵⁹ Crenshaw, "Causes of Terrorism", 38.

¹⁶⁰ Sandler and Enders, "An economic perspective on transnational terrorism", 311.

¹⁶¹ Crenshaw, "Causes of Terrorism", 385.

¹⁶² Crenshaw, "Causes of Terrorism", 386.

influence from their home country, reformists seeking to disrupt and discredit the processes of government, or a variety of other classifications, dependent on their overall objective or goal.¹⁶³ As such, a ‘terrorist’ organisation is not an identity in and of itself, but is linked to the decision to use terrorist tactics to achieve a defined goal. Terrorist groups are also highly adaptive in their tactics, based on what will best achieve their objectives.¹⁶⁴ When a terrorist attack takes place outside the home country of the terrorist group, or involves victims or targets from a second country; the decision to carry out a transnational attack must serve to achieve or partly achieve a desired objective.¹⁶⁵

Here, a transnational terrorist organisation must have identified the benefit of engaging in transnational activity in order to achieve a particular objective. Within this framework, Al Shabaab straddles both the revolutionary and nationalist categories; drivers for its transnational activity fits most easily in the latter, whereby conducting attacks in countries intervening in the conflict in Somalia, specifically Djibouti and Kenya, is likely to serve to discourage their presence in Somalia.

3.3 Key components

The rational choice model assumes the following regarding transnational terrorist actors:

1. Possess stable and consistent (political) goals.
2. Weigh the anticipated benefits of terrorist action against the expected costs of available options of action.
3. Select the option with the optimum expected utility.¹⁶⁶

These political goals should be encoded in the political platform and stated objectives of the terrorist organisation. A terrorist organisation will make use of transnational terror as a method of violence when it is the most viable option to achieve the highest obtainable goal. As such, the choice to use transnational terror tactics is based on their political effectiveness relative to alternatives in achieving the organisation’s goals.¹⁶⁷ The continuation of terrorism as a mechanism of violence should then be based on its demonstrated effectiveness in achieving or

¹⁶³ Crenshaw, “Causes of Terrorism”, 386.

¹⁶⁴ Alexander Gutfraind, “Targeting by transnational terrorist groups”, *Counterterrorism and Open Source Intelligence*, ed. Wiil, Uffe Kock. (New York: Springer, 2011): 9.

¹⁶⁵ Sandler and Enders, “An economic perspective on transnational terrorism”, 302.

¹⁶⁶ Max Abrahms, “What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy”, *International Security*, 32 (4) (2002) : 86.

¹⁶⁷ Abrahams, “What Terrorists Really Want”, 87.

partly achieving some of the organisation's goals.¹⁶⁸ In accordance with the rational model, an organisation employs terrorism when alternatives will not achieve the designated and relatively consistent objectives of the group to a greater degree. The use of transnational terror should thus relate either to a transnational goal or have the requisite impact to achieve a domestic goal.

3.4 Al Shabaab as a rational actor

Since its inception, Al Shabaab has advocated a nationalist agenda, with the objective of overthrowing the Ethiopia-backed TFG and, later, the FGS. Al Shabaab also sought to establish an Islamic state in Somalia. In line with this nationalist objective, the group has sought to rid Somalia of foreign control. Defeating foreign troops in Somalia served to support its nationalist aim. The TFG and the FGS were not only seen by the group as illegitimate but as dependent on foreign support for their existence.

Despite remaining focused on its domestic objectives, specifically the overthrow of the current administration, Al Shabaab demonstrated both the intent and the capacity to conduct attacks outside of Somalia after 2008; this was most clearly demonstrated by the July 2010 Kampala bombings and the attack against the affluent Westgate shopping complex in Nairobi's Westlake suburb in September 2013. These attacks have been accompanied by an increasingly transnational rhetoric, with the group publically threatening to and subsequently conducting attacks outside Somalia. The group has since claimed further attacks in Kenya and Djibouti, proclaiming that these were carried out in retaliation for these countries' respective military involvement and contribution to counter-insurgency operations in Somalia.¹⁶⁹

In 2008, Al Shabaab adopted rhetoric more strongly reflective of a transnational conflict. In an audio recording in April of that year, Al Shabaab declared that its enemies were no longer confined to local warlords and the 'apostate' government.¹⁷⁰ States intervening in the conflict were also deemed enemies, as was the US, in line with the group's growing relationship with Al Qaeda.¹⁷¹ It is evident that by 2008, Al Shabaab had at least two identifiable objectives ordered in degree of importance:

¹⁶⁸ Abrahams, "What Terrorists Really Want", 87.

¹⁶⁹ "Al Shabaab planning attacks in Djibouti says Foreign Office", *The Guardian*, 12 June 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/12/somali-insurgents-al-shabaab-planning-attacks-djibouti>

¹⁷⁰ "Al Shabaab threatens more attacks in Mogadishu over Ramadan", *Daily Nation*, 1 July 2014; <http://www.nation.co.ke/news/africa/Al-Shabaab-threatens-more-attacks-in-Mogadishu-over-Ramadhan/-/1066/2367962/-/9yq3shz/-/index.html>

¹⁷¹ Adlini Ilma Ghaisany Sjah, "Tracing Al Shabaab's decision to cooperate with Al Qaeda in Somalia", 2.

1. Nationalist goals with regard to defeating the Somali government.
2. The establishment of an Islamic state in Somalia.

Under ideal conditions, Al Shabaab's actions should endeavour to achieve the group's nationalist goals as its primary objective. However, in accordance with the Rational Choice Model, due to surrounding circumstances the group has had to assess the available avenues through which this could be achieved. Having faced severe losses in Mogadishu and Kismayo, the group did not possess the requisite capability to combat Somali government forces that had been bolstered by AMISOM and Kenyan troops. As a rational actor, Al Shabaab had to strategise an achievable path that would assist in the attainment of its ultimate goal. As such, the group would need to weaken its opponent, most directly by reducing its foreign support. Unable to match these foreign actors in conventional conflict on the ground in Somalia, an alternative was to discourage these actors from providing support. These difficulties are identifiable in the period between March and August 2008 and are most starkly illustrated by Al Shabaab's public declaration of allegiance to Al Qaeda in 2012, which has facilitated the group in its efforts to attack foreign targets.¹⁷²

While it is evident that the group increased its transnational agenda, with attacks in Uganda, Kenya and Djibouti, it maintained its insurgent campaign at home. Al Shabaab did not deviate too far from its overall objectives; from the group's perspective, this could be seen as an effective strategy to achieve its ultimate nationalist goal. The Rational Choice Model is able to show a clear process in which Al Shabaab has employed the use of transnational terrorism as a method of violence in an effort to rid Somalia of foreign actors. Battle fatigue and overstretched resources among the AMISOM troops by 2012 saw AMISOM commanders hesitant to push on from recaptured territory, choosing to consolidate control over held territories.¹⁷³ This tactical failure allowed Al Shabaab to regroup in southern Somalia, and in mid-2013 there was a surge in domestic terrorist attacks by the group, specifically in Mogadishu. These included an attack on the Mogadishu High Court (April 2013), UN compound in Mogadishu (June 2013) and the Turkish Embassy building (August 2013), a

¹⁷² Adlini Ilma Ghaisany Sjah, "Tracing Al Shabaab's decision to cooperate with Al Qaeda in Somalia", 6.

¹⁷³ Anderson and McKnight, "Kenya at war: Al Shabaab and its enemies in Eastern Africa", 14.

month before the September 2013 Westgate attack.¹⁷⁴ The targets of these attacks are clear, namely, the FGS and interests of the foreign presence in the country.

The FGS remains heavily dependent on AMISOM and KDF troops for its legitimacy and authority through the control of force in Somalia. If these transnational attacks have the desired effect of prompting AMISOM-contributing countries to pull out of Somalia, the operating environment in Somalia may once again be conducive to achieving Al Shabaab's primary goal.

From a rational perspective, in order to achieve its primary objective of overthrowing the FGS, Al Shabaab would need to secure local support in order to hold on to regions under its control and extend beyond them. Evidence from the period between 2006 and 2007 shows that Al Shabaab pursued public support in its efforts against the TFG as part of its successes for the UIC.¹⁷⁵ Al Shabaab offered a more stable alternative to the warlord structure in place, specifically in Mogadishu.¹⁷⁶ In return, local communities supported Al Shabaab's efforts. Furthermore, through its anti-TFG agenda, Al Shabaab garnered the support of the Hawiye clan, which saw the Ethiopia-backed TFG as favouring the Majeerteen-Rahawin alliance.¹⁷⁷

Yet Al Shabaab soon faced significant domestic challenges, not only with the bolstering foreign troop presence and successes of the AMISOM operations from 2007, but also with the emergence of cleavages within its top leadership under Godane as early as 2008, which threatened to splinter the group. In addition, public support in Al Shabaab-held areas was waning, as the group's style of governance came into conflict with local customary authorities and had become increasingly violent. At this point, Al Shabaab had adopted a predominantly Salafi character, which was not widely welcomed. Indicative of this, towards the end of 2008 there emerged a counter-militant Islamic movement, from the previously purely political Ahlu Sunna wal Jamaa (ASWJ); the group challenged Al Shabaab's Salafist approach, claiming that it excluded other schools of Islam, particularly that of Sufi beliefs, to which the ASWJ subscribed.¹⁷⁸ ASWJ challenged areas under Al Shabaab's control and was supported by clan allegiances. Al Shabaab's legitimacy, garnered by bringing greater stability to parts of the country, was also waning given the continuing violence in the country. A coinciding dynamic, which is likely to have led to a further decline in popular support for Al Shabaab, was the

¹⁷⁴ Anderson and McKnight, "Kenya at war: Al Shabaab and its enemies in Eastern Africa", 13.

¹⁷⁵ Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012*; 23.

¹⁷⁶ Adlini Ilma Ghaisany Sjah, "Tracing Al Shabaab's decision to cooperate with Al Qaeda in Somalia", 4.

¹⁷⁷ Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012*; 31.

¹⁷⁸ Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012*; 31.

increased targeting of civilians in Al Shabaab attacks. According to data from the GTD,¹⁷⁹ between October 2007 and February 2008 military interests were the primary targets in attacks; however, between April 2008 and August 2008, this shifted to primarily civilian interests.¹⁸⁰

In addition, on 1 May 2008, then-leader of Al Shabaab, Aden Hashi 'Ayro, was killed in a US-led airstrike.¹⁸¹ Following 'Ayro's death, Ahmed Abdi Aw-Mohamed Godane was declared the group's new leader.¹⁸² Under Godane, Al Shabaab became more closely aligned with Al Qaeda, while simultaneously struggling to achieve its nationalist objectives. Whereas Ayro had emphasised the nationalist and anti-Ethiopian agenda, never specifically making reference to Osama Bin Laden, Godane's approach was the opposite.¹⁸³ In Godane's statements, he alluded to and at times outwardly declared allegiance to then-Al Qaeda leader, Osama Bin Laden, before officially declaring the group's allegiance to Al Qaeda in August 2012.¹⁸⁴ With the waning of local support, it can be argued that Al Shabaab sought to secure backing from Al Qaeda.

Al Shabaab's proximity to Al Qaeda, particularly under Godane, epitomised the trajectory of 'sacralisation'. The sacralisation of a conflict allows for religion (more specifically, the militant interpretation thereof) to evolve from what was previously a secondary factor at the onset of the conflict, to a primary one.¹⁸⁵ Here, in a conflict originally caused by factors other than religion, religion becomes increasingly useful in advancing the actor's position. Given that Al Qaeda's ideology includes both a domestic and transnational fight, by corollary, as an Al Qaeda affiliate, Al Shabaab was compelled to expand its own focus beyond its domestic agenda.¹⁸⁶ With regard to Al Shabaab, it is evident that the group's objectives had shifted from a more nationalist agenda to a global jihadist ideology.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, a sacralised conflict limited

¹⁷⁹ The Global Terrorism Database (GTD) is an open-source database containing information on terrorist events around the world from 1970 to 2014, developed by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), a subsidiary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security at the University of Maryland.

¹⁸⁰ The Global Terrorism Database (GTD), National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), a subsidiary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security at the University of Maryland.

¹⁸¹ Reid, "Killing of al-Shabaab Leader Throws Future of Militant Group into Question"

¹⁸² Reid, "Killing of al-Shabaab Leader Throws Future of Militant Group into Question"

¹⁸³ Adlini Ilma Ghaisany Sjah, "Tracing Al Shabaab's decision to cooperate with Al Qaeda in Somalia", 6.

¹⁸⁴ "Somali militant group Al Shabaab formally joins Al Qaeda", *The Guardian*, 9 February 2012;

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/feb/09/somali-al-shabaab-join-al-qaida>

¹⁸⁵ Lorenzo Vidino, Raffaello Pantucci, and Evan Kohlmann, "Bringing Global Jihad to the Horn of Africa: Al Shabaab, western fighters, and the sacralization of the Somali Conflict", *African Security* 3, no. 4 (2010): 217.

¹⁸⁶ Daniel Agbiboa, "Terrorism without Borders: Somalia's Al-Shabaab and the global jihad network", *Journal of Terrorism Research* 5, no. 1 (2014): 30.

¹⁸⁷ Vidino, Pantucci, and Kohlmann, "Bringing Global Jihad to the Horn of Africa", 218.

the potential for a negotiated settlement due to the limited space for political compromise, given the newly espoused pious agenda. As a result of limited resources to wage conventional warfare and a desire to target foreign actors, transnational terrorism became a viable option and Al Shabaab began to operate outside of Somalia. However, this was not within a stable framework of objectives. Rather, external factors, including a leadership change, came to impact the intent and direction of the group. Al Shabaab's relationship with Al Qaeda also continued to strengthen; in February 2012, Godane appeared in a joint video with latest Al Qaeda head, Ayman Al Zawahiri, affirming Al Shabaab's allegiance to the group.¹⁸⁸

This allegiance has proven beneficial to the group's emerging transnational goals and is understood to have secured tactical training, funding, and recruitment networks. Since its declaration of allegiance to Al Qaeda, Al Shabaab has adopted tactics which mimic those of Al Qaeda, including a greater use of suicide bombers, IEDs and roadside bombings. These methods became more prevalent between 2010 and 2011.¹⁸⁹

It is evident that developments in Somalia and within Al Shabaab (at a sub-unit level) affected the group and its actions. Al Shabaab has an inherent capacity to transform itself. Al Shabaab following the loss of Kismayo in 2012 is very different to Al Shabaab between 2007 and 2008.¹⁹⁰ The Rational Choice Model reveals the transient nature of Al Shabaab as a transnational actor which is subject to the surrounding conditions, rather than one chained to stable objectives.

This approach does not fully explain the entrenched operational presence that Al Shabaab has established in Kenya which, given the outlined rationality behind the transnational attacks, is not necessary. If the objective of transnational terrorism falls in line with the transnational fight against states contributing to the war in Somalia, the overarching objective remains domestic, and as Al Shabaab gains any upper hand on the domestic front, the group will likely shift focus back to its nationalist goals. An entrenched presence in Kenya divides the group geographically and, within a group which has already dealt with internal factions, could lead to the splitting

¹⁸⁸ "Al Shabaab joining Al Qaeda", *CNN News*, 10 February 2012, accessed 2 April 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/02/09/world/africa/somalia-shabaab-qaeda/index.html>

¹⁸⁹ Daniel Agbiboa, "Shifting the battleground: The transformation of Al Shabab and the growing influence of Al Qaeda in East Africa and the Horn", *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies*, 42 (2015): 177.

¹⁹⁰ Anderson and McKnight, "Kenya at war: Al Shabaab and its enemies in Eastern Africa", 26.

and weakening of the group. A presence in Kenya does not reflect a strengthening of the group in a conventional sense, as Al Shabaab is not capturing and holding territory within Kenya.

Furthermore, through the aforementioned process of tracing Al Shabaab's relationship with Al Qaeda, the distinct leadership change between 'Ayro and Godane emerges as a likely intervening variable in Al Shabaab's transformation. While the model requires us to assume that Al Shabaab is a unitary rational actor, it is evident that the preferences of Godane may have greatly influenced the shift towards a more global (or regional) agenda. The leadership purge that Al Shabaab underwent in 2013 created a smaller but not necessarily weaker organisation, having shown no sign of diminished capacity in the wake of the 2013 Mogadishu attacks. This is likely to have made Al Shabaab easier to direct in accordance with Godane's objectives.

Finally, if indeed this shift to transnational attacks is a result of a cost/benefit analysis, for the achievement of a transnational fight against states contributing to the war in Somalia, it is worth noting the apparent lack of Al Shabaab attacks in Ethiopia, which has been identified as the key backer of the TFG and FSG and as a former key opponent of Al Shabaab in Somalia. While Al Shabaab has iterated a clear intent to target the country, the level of reported Al Shabaab activity in Ethiopia, compared to Kenya, is low.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ "Al Shabaab Activities in Kenya; Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED)", <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/al-shabaab-in-kenya-august-2015-update/>

Chapter 4: Spill-over Conflict

4.1 Introduction

The organisational approach equates a terrorist organisation to all other organisations, ranging from corporate to communal; here, the overarching aim of any action is always the survival of the organisation itself. As such, it is not the political objectives of the group as a political actor which come to determine the actions of the group, but rather the organisational demands to ensure its survival. These demands emanate largely from the external context in which the organisation exists. Accordingly, a group's actions, including engaging in transnational terrorism, are not necessarily a direct reflection of the group's ideology or political objectives, but are necessitated by the need to ensure the survival of the group.¹⁹²

4.2 The theory

The shift from domestic terror to transnational terror may indeed be a consequence of surrounding factors in the country of origin. For Napps and Enders, transnational terrorist attacks are often conducted in response to shocks to the *domestic* environment in which the group operates. Here, a transnational terrorist attack is an indicator of *spill-over* violence.¹⁹³ Broadly speaking, spill-over effects comprise the consequences of a civil conflict; the overall premise is that civil conflicts create new tensions through their effects, one of the most prominent of which is the mass influx of refugees into a neighbouring territory.¹⁹⁴ Here, subsequent conflict is a result of the unintended spill over of a civil strife and a neighbour's efforts to prevent or limit the detrimental impact within their own territory.¹⁹⁵ According to Michael Scott Doran, transnational terrorism relates to a civil conflict taking place elsewhere and, as such, these attacks can be defined within a broader approach to the notion of spill-over conflict.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² Ozdamar, "*Theorising terrorist behaviour*", 93.

¹⁹³ Napps and Enders, "A regional investigation into the interrelationship of domestic and transnational terrorism", 3.

¹⁹⁴ Gleditsch, Salehyan and Schultz, "Fighting at home, fighting abroad", 9.

¹⁹⁵ Gleditsch, Salehyan and Schultz, "Fighting at home, fighting abroad", 19.

¹⁹⁶ Michael Scott Doran, "Somebody's else's Civil War", *Foreign Affairs*, 2002, accessible <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2002-01-01/somebody-elses-civil-war>

For Halvard Buhaug and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, there is a definitive ‘neighbourhood’ dynamic to armed conflict.¹⁹⁷ Gleditsch in particular posits that there are transnational factors between neighbouring states which can impact the risk of violent civil conflict.¹⁹⁸ In turn, the risk of civil war is not determined solely by a country’s domestic characteristics.¹⁹⁹ While the studies into the mechanisms by which this interaction takes place are in no way exhausted or conclusive, Salehyan and Gleditsch have highlighted the role of population movements as an important mechanism through which a conflict can spread beyond the primary area of violence, including to neighbouring countries.²⁰⁰ This is exacerbated by the tendency for protracted refugee situations, characterised by extended periods of exile, to occur in the most proximate hosts.²⁰¹

Gleditsch argues that the presence of refugees from neighbouring countries leads to an increased probability of violence, suggesting that refugees are *one* important source of conflict spread.²⁰² This manifests as the direct introduction of combatants, arms or the ideologies of armed groups in the civil strife into the neighbouring state. A second manifestation is the provision of logistical support to the domestic affiliates. A third manifestation concerns a negative externality in which the influx of refugees alters the community/ethnic/religious or ideological dynamic in the host country, resulting in local discontent between refugee and domestic communities.²⁰³ Many host states seek to contain the impact of an influx of refugees by hosting refugee camps in isolated, remote border regions.²⁰⁴ However, this can serve to facilitate associated security concerns in host countries which neighbour the conflict-affected state.

¹⁹⁷ Halvard Buhaug, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "Contagion or Confusion? Why Conflicts Cluster in Space1", *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (2008): 215.

¹⁹⁸ Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "Transnational dimensions of civil war", *Journal of Peace Research* 44, no. 3 (2007): 293.

¹⁹⁹ Gleditsch, "Transnational dimensions of civil war", 293.

²⁰⁰ Idean Salehyan and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "Refugees and the spread of civil war", *International Organization* 60, no. 02 (2006): 335.

²⁰¹ Gil Loescher and James Milner, "The significance of protracted refugee situations", *The Adelphi Papers* 45, no. 375 (2005): 7.

²⁰² Salehyan and Gleditsch, "Refugees and the spread of civil war", 335.

²⁰³ Salehyan and Gleditsch, "Refugees and the spread of civil war", 42; and Loescher and Milner, "The significance of protracted refugee situations", 8.

²⁰⁴ Loescher and Milner, "The significance of protracted refugee situations", 9.

While many studies have identified a link between an increase in refugees and the spread of civil war,²⁰⁵ certain studies have also found a link between hosting refugee communities and an increase in other political violence, including terrorism. In their study on the consequences of hosting refugee populations, Seung-Whan Choi and Idean Salehyan found that countries which host large refugee populations are more likely to experience both domestic and transnational terrorism.²⁰⁶

According to Midlarsky, Crenshaw and Yoshida, spill-over violence can take the form of transnational terrorist attacks, through what they define as contagion terrorism.²⁰⁷ This paradigm posits that domestic terrorist attacks may in turn lead to further violence through a process of imitation.²⁰⁸ Again, Napps and Ender find that Sub-Saharan Africa (which in their study includes Somalia) proved to be particularly vulnerable to the effects of contagion due to the presence of a number of weak states and significant population movements through poorly secured and porous borders.²⁰⁹ These factors, specifically population movement, are exacerbated during times of conflict. In the context of conflict in Somalia and the subsequent spill-over effects (including refugee movement) into neighbouring countries, the region proves highly conducive to the contagion of terrorism. Transnational terrorism is thus seen as the regionalisation of a domestic dispute occurring in another country.²¹⁰

4.3 Key components

The spill-over violence model assumes the following regarding (conflict) terrorist actors:

1. The domestic environment of a country engaged in civil war impacts a neighbouring state.
2. This occurs most prominently through population movement.

²⁰⁵ See Salehyan and Gleditsch, "Refugees and the spread of civil war," 335; and Buhaug and Gleditsch, "Contagion or Confusion? Why Conflicts Cluster in Space1".

²⁰⁶ Seung-Whan Choi and Idean Salehyan, "No good deed goes unpunished: refugees, humanitarian aid, and terrorism", *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 30, no. 1 (2013):53.

²⁰⁷ Manus Midlarsky, Martha Crenshaw and Fumihiko Yoshida, "Why violence spreads: The contagion of international terrorism", *International Studies Quarterly* (1980): 262-298.

²⁰⁸ Lawrence C Hamilton and James D Hamilton, "Dynamics of terrorism", *International Studies Quarterly* (1983): 52.

²⁰⁹ Napps and Enders, "A regional investigation into the interrelationship of domestic and transnational terrorism", 13.

²¹⁰ Tony Addison and S Mansoob Murshed, "Transnational Terrorism as a Spillover of Domestic Disputes in Other Countries", *Defence and Peace Economics* 16, no. 2 (2005): 70.

In this instance, population movements result in the diffusion of a conflict from the origin country to a host country. The ideologies and goals of belligerents involved in the original conflict come to encompass dynamics of the host country, which in turn is impacted by the violence. When applied to the actions of a terrorist group in which, by definition, the target and the victim of attacks are separate,²¹¹ attacks outside of its country of origin are a consequence of available opportunity as a result of these spill-over dynamics rather than a rational choice.

4.4 Spill-over conflict in Somalia

As outlined in Chapter 2, Somalia has been in a near-constant state of conflict since the fall of Siad Barre in 1991. The two year civil war allowed for the militarisation of society through the proliferation of arms. In the absence of the central state, these faction militias became the providers of security at a sub state level. Furthermore, after more than two decades of instability in Somalia, there are 967,200 registered Somali refugees living abroad. These refugee populations are hosted by Kenya, Ethiopia, Yemen, Uganda, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea and Tanzania.²¹² Kenya hosts the most refugees, with 420,199, followed by Ethiopia with 249,012.²¹³

Despite years of conflict, the failure of the TFG in consolidation a central state, coupled with the ongoing presence of external forces, enabled the resurgence of an independent Al Shabaab from 2006.²¹⁴ As before, the use of armed militias were deemed requisite to maintain authority and well as offer security provision. However, this also represented a further militarisation of Somalia's society.²¹⁵ The use of violence had become synonymous with both dealing with conflict and security provision amid a general rise of criminality among armed groups.²¹⁶ Another significant consequence was the creation of a protracted refugee crisis.

Prior to Somalia's governmental collapse in 1991, Kenya had adopted a lax refugee policy. However, by 1992, the Somali refugee population in Kenya had grown significantly, reaching

²¹¹ Refer to Chapter 2 for a review of the definition of terrorism.

²¹² "Refugees in the Horn of Africa", *The UN Refugee Agency*; <http://data.unhcr.org/horn-of-africa/regional.php>

²¹³ "Refugees in the Horn of Africa", *The UN Refugee Agency*; <http://data.unhcr.org/horn-of-africa/regional.php>

²¹⁴ David M Anderson, "Clan Identity and Islamic Identity in Somalia." *CEADS Papers Volume 2: Somalia* (2012): 4.

²¹⁵ Anderson, "Clan Identity and Islamic Identity in Somalia."; 4

²¹⁶ Lyn Snodgrass, and Philip Arthur Njuguna Mwanika. "Dynamics and Politics of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Violent Conflicts Arms Control and its Challenges in Somalia." *Africa Insight* 43, no. 1 (2013).

285,000.²¹⁷ As the influx of Somali and Sudanese refugees increased amid political crises and a devastating drought in those two countries in the 1990s, the Kenyan government advocated for a more stringent refugee policy.²¹⁸ The Kenyan government sought to largely contain Somali refugee populations to the Dadaab camps (Ifo, Hagadera and Dagahaley) in the former North Eastern province (today's Garissa County) and, to a lesser extent, to the Kakuma camp located in Turkana County.²¹⁹ In addition, in the 1990s the Kenyan government yielded much control of the administration of the camps to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).²²⁰ This came to reflect Kenya's asylum policy of 'abdication' and 'containment'.²²¹ This abdication was a direct contradiction of the principle that primary responsibility for refugees lies with the host state. As a result, a wide range of tasks for the administration of the camps fell to the UNHCR. Although the influx of refugees into Kenya stabilised in 1995, by 2007, with the rise of Al Shabaab in Somalia, refugee numbers in Kenya again increased. This influx followed a decline in available UNHCR funding for the camps. UNHCR's available global budget in 2002 was reduced by USD 19 million.²²² These dynamics put severe pressure on the Dadaab camp, as well as the surrounding locality. Although this policy failure was set to be rectified with the passing of the 2006 Refugee Act, which provided for a Department of Refugee Affairs, the implementation of the act fell short.²²³ Under the containment policy, refugees from Somalia were required to reside in the designated camps; this requirement was not addressed or altered in the Refugee Act.

Since 1993, the Kenyan administration has continually justified its refugee policy, claiming that the 1991 influx had overwhelmed the country's refugee management infrastructure, forcing an encampment policy. In addition, government rhetoric reflected notions that the refugee population would inherently put strain on domestic communities, while being a potential threat to national security. Although the first justification held true to a degree, the

²¹⁷ Anna Lindley, "Between a protracted and a crisis situation: policy responses to Somali refugees in Kenya", *Refugee Survey Quarterly* (2011): 5.

²¹⁸ Avery Burns, "Feeling the Pinch: Kenya, Al-Shabaab, and East Africa's Refugee Crisis", *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* 27, no. 1 (2010): 6.

²¹⁹ Burns, "Feeling the Pinch: Kenya, Al-Shabaab, and East Africa's Refugee Crisis", 6.

²²⁰ James Milner, *Refugees, the State and the Politics of Asylum in Africa*. (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan), 2009: 8.

²²¹ Milner, *Refugees, the State and the Politics of Asylum in Africa*, 89.

²²² "The Human Costs of the Funding Shortfalls for the Dadaab Refugee Camps", *Oxfam*, <https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/the-human-costs-of-the-funding-shortfalls-for-the-dadaab-refugee-camps.pdf> and "UN funding crisis", *UNHCR Briefing Notes*, 22 October 2002; <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=3db52ba54&query=hand>

²²³ Milner, *Refugees, the State and the Politics of Asylum in Africa*, 89.

refugee population was largely stable between 1992 and 2004, and the latter requires further examination in light of Al Shabaab's regionalisation through these camps.

The Dadaab refugee camp is located approximately 80km from the border with Somalia, and the wider region hosts a large Somali Kenyan population. Since its establishment, the camp's population has continued to swell and as of April 2015, was at approximately 600,000 residents. The Somali refugee situation in Kenya has become a protracted crisis; some of the residents are third-generation refugees, having never travelled to Somalia.²²⁴ The funding crisis felt since the mid-1990s has resulted in an UNHCR policy to maintain minimum standards in the increasingly overpopulated camp. Accordingly, the Dadaab camp offers a conducive environment for refugee militarisation. Firstly, it is close to the border of Somalia and to the source of the original conflict and where community level militarization had proliferated since the civil war. Secondly, it has developed into a protracted refugee crisis, which is more vulnerable to refugee militarisation. Finally, the deteriorating security standards at the camp amid the funding crisis have facilitated militant infiltration together with increased smuggling and banditry networks between Kenya and Somalia.²²⁵

Although the Kenyan government initially sought to securitise the Dadaab camp, security levels at the camp deteriorated as a result of the ensuing funding crisis due to the protracted nature of the refugee crisis. In addition, the proliferation of small arms and an increase in terrorism have been seen as direct consequences of the influx of Somali refugees. This sentiment holds true today, with the current Kenyatta administration issuing an ultimatum calling for the repatriation of the 600,000 Somalis in the Dadaab refugee complex following the April 2015 Garissa University College attacks.²²⁶

The link between Islamist militants and the Dadaab refugee camp can be traced back as early as 2002, when US intelligence sources traced an attack in Mombasa to AIAI; the perpetrators reportedly sought safety in Dadaab.²²⁷ The camp is also perceived as a recruitment ground for Al Shabaab, with recruits able to travel a short distance across the porous border. Al Shabaab's

²²⁴ Milner, *Refugees, the State and the Politics of Asylum in Africa*, 90.

²²⁵ Ken Menkhaus, *Somalia: State collapse and the threat of terrorism*. No. 364. Routledge, 2013: 52

²²⁶ 'Kenya's ultimatum: Does it punish Somali refugees?', *Al Jazeera*, 12 April 2015; <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2015/04/kenya-ultimatum-punish-somali-refugees-150412195034949.html>

²²⁷ Milner, *Refugees, the State and the Politics of Asylum in Africa*, 96.

largest presence in Kenya is reportedly in areas close to the Somali border.²²⁸ State security control along the border has been historically weak and sporadic, allowing for the high influx of refugees into Kenyan territory. However, counties along the Somali border rely on cross-border trade, which has also facilitated covert cross-border activity by Al Shabaab militants outside of the confined refugee camps.²²⁹

Despite these claims, there are no official reports of forced recruitment in the Dadaab camp. Anecdotal reports and a 2009 investigation by the international NGO and human rights advocacy group, Human Rights Watch, suggest that Al Shabaab has actively recruited members from Dadaab.²³⁰ With little improvement made to security provision at the camp since then, such networks have likely continued. While Al Shabaab's evident infiltration of Kenya's refugee community demonstrated the strategic use of refugees in war and served to illustrate the spill over of Somalia's domestic conflict into Kenya, these recruits are likely to form foot-soldiers for the organisation and do not necessarily translate into the regionalisation of Al Shabaab's terrorism campaign, which required a higher degree of coordination beyond bolstering recruits on the ground in Somalia. According to the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia in 2010, the leaders of Al Shabaab and other Islamist organisations travel to Nairobi with greater freedom and frequency than to Dadaab. The Nairobi suburb of Eastleigh, in particular, is believed to hold Al Shabaab sympathisers; it is not purely the presence of Al Shabaab supporters or recruits in refugee camps which have facilitated Al Shabaab operations in Kenya.

The domination of and competition between sub-national organisations since the fall of Barre have severely impacted the survival of a national government in Somalia and created a protracted refugee crisis outside of the country. Yet, this refugee crisis has been ongoing for several decades and does not provide sufficient explanation as to why the rise in transnational activity by Al Shabaab took place over five years since the group's formation. Rather, these transnational attacks increased in frequency following Kenya's independent intervention in Somalia. Furthermore, refugee camps have not been the sites of the greatest recorded logistical

²²⁸ Valter Vilkkö, "Al-Shabaab: From external support to internal extraction", *Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University* (2011): 15.

²²⁹ Vilkkö, "Al-Shabaab: From external support to internal extraction," 15.

²³⁰ "Kenya: Stop Recruitment of Somalis in Refugee Camps: Deception Used to Enlist Refugees to Fight in Somalia", *Human Rights Watch*, 2009, accessible <https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/10/22/kenya-stop-recruitment-somalis-refugee-camps>

activity of Al Shabaab operatives, which have been traced to the urban centres of Nairobi and Mombasa. In addition, with Ethiopia hosting the second-largest number of Somali refugees and Tanzania also hosting a sizeable population, the lack of associated Al Shabaab transnational attacks in these countries does not easily meet the assumptions of this approach.

Al Shabaab attacks against Kenya have been linked to Kenya's independent intervention in the conflict in Somalia, particularly following the launch of 'Operation Linda Nchi' in October 2011.²³¹ Here, the conflict within one state, in the form of the Al Shabaab insurgency in Somalia, generates new issues of contention.²³² For example, the insurgency in Somalia was a threat to security along Kenya's border, promoting the state to intervene.²³³ However, this intervention drummed up Al Shabaab's intent to target Kenyan interests, prompting an externalisation of the conflict into Kenyan territory, with Al Shabaab subsequently conducting attacks on Kenyan soil.²³⁴

²³¹ Anderson and McKnight, "Understanding Al Shabaab: clan, Islam and insurgency in Kenya", 547.

²³² Gleditsch, Salehyan and Schultz, "Fighting at home, fighting abroad", 9.

²³³ Jeremy Lind, Patrick Mutahi and Marjoke Oosterom, "Tangled Ties: Al Shabaab and Political Volatility in Kenya", *Institute of Development Studies*, April 2015: 16.

²³⁴ Anderson and McKnight, "Understanding Al Shabaab: clan, Islam and insurgency in Kenya": 546, and Gleditsch, Salehyan and Schultz, "Fighting at home, fighting abroad", 14.

Chapter 5: Regional War Complex

5.1 Introduction

For Gersovitz and Kriger, there is a need to distinguish between civil wars (which may or may not come to impact neighbouring countries) and regional war complexes.²³⁵ The latter emphasises the interdependence between all states which are affected by a civil conflict. The inherent interconnectivity between these states may facilitate not only the spread of conflict, but the regionalisation of terrorism. The spread of terrorism, from this perspective, is not purely the objective of the actor, nor is it a product of shocks within the actor's domestic environment. Rather, it stems from wider and entrenched regional dynamics through which an actor involved in the conflict must navigate.

5.2 The theory

According to Gersovitz and Kriger, a civil war is defined as, “a politically organised, large-scale, sustained, physically violent conflict that occurs within a country principally among large/numerically important groups of its inhabitants or citizens over the monopoly of physical force from within the country”.²³⁶ However, a conflict moves away from this definition with the involvement of ‘foreign’ actors which are not citizens or inhabitants of the country in which the conflict takes place. These foreign actors become key participants in a conflict through the provision of fighters, arms, bases or other forms of assistance. In a regional war complex, the ratio of domestic to foreign participation equalises or even tips in favour of foreign participation. This high level of foreign participation must be sufficient to challenge the government's monopoly of force. Accordingly, a regional war complex is defined as, “a politically organised, large-scale, sustained, physically violent conflict among large groups of inhabitants or citizens of more than one country, and in at least one of these countries, at least two groups of inhabitants or citizens must be bona fide contenders for the monopoly of physical force”.²³⁷ The regionalisation of an armed conflict can be understood as either the geographical diffusion of conflict to a new territory or as an escalation of violence within the original territory, which draws in new actors.²³⁸ As such, a conflict is not limited to only two distinct

²³⁵ Gersovitz and Kriger, “What is a civil war?” 16.

²³⁶ Gersovitz and Kriger, “What is a civil war?” 2.

²³⁷ Gersovitz and Kriger, “What is a civil war?” 15 and 16.

²³⁸ Nadine Ansorg, “Wars without borders: Conditions for the development of regional conflict systems in sub-Saharan Africa”, *International Area Studies Review* 17 (3) (2014): 295.

actors; rather, there is a multiplicity of actors and tend to have a trans-border scope.²³⁹In her study of the conditions required for the development of regional conflict systems, Nadine Ansorg identifies at least four conditions which lead to a regional war complex.²⁴⁰ These include:

1. Economic networks sustained through the support of neighbouring countries.
2. An intervention on the part of a government.
3. Militarised refugees.
4. A non-salient regional identity of a belligerent group.

In their study of transnational terrorism as spill over of domestic disputes elsewhere, Tony Addison and Mansoob Murshed found that transnational terrorism comprises, at least, a three-way interaction involving a government that faces an armed opposition domestically, which will spill over in the form of acts of terrorism by the opposition against sponsors or supporters of the home government.²⁴¹

5.3 Key components

A regional war complex exists when:

1. There is the involvement of ‘foreign’ actors, which are not citizens or inhabitants of the country where the conflict is taking place.
2. A multiplicity of actors is present.
3. The participation of foreign actors is high.
4. At least one of the following conditions must be met;
 - a. Economic networks sustained through the support of neighbouring countries.
 - b. An intervention on the part of a government.
 - c. Militarised refugees.
 - d. A non-salient regional identity of a belligerent group.

²³⁹ Ansorg, “Wars without borders: Conditions for the development of regional conflict systems in sub-Saharan Africa,” 297.

²⁴⁰ Ansorg, “Wars without borders: Conditions for the development of regional conflict systems in sub-Saharan Africa,” 308.

²⁴¹ Addison and Murshed, "Transnational terrorism as a spillover of domestic disputes in other countries", 80.

5.4 Al Shabaab in a regional war complex

The Horn of Africa as regional war complex

The Horn of Africa conventionally encompasses Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti and Eritrea; however, today, literature regarding the region includes Kenya, Uganda and Sudan.²⁴² This is supported by the regional bloc, IGAD, of which Djibouti, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Uganda and Kenya are member states. These states are considered to share not only geographical similarities, but social and cultural factors, common religious practices and economic linkages.

However, this interconnectivity includes political linkages whereby the domestic dynamics of one state have inextricably influenced its neighbours. The Horn of Africa has among the world's lowest per-capita income, life expectancy and literacy rates, as well as high infant mortality rates.²⁴³ The region is of strategic importance to global powers as the gate to the Gulf of Suez and Suez Canal. In light of these connections, Gersovitz and Kriger identify the Horn of Africa (which they define as including Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan) as a regional war complex.²⁴⁴

The region has been plagued by numerous conflicts which, together with natural disasters such as drought and famine, have led to high population movements of refugees and internally displaced persons.²⁴⁵ Post-independence government regimes in the region have also been characterised by authoritarian leadership which has played on often-politicised ethnic and clan-based cleavages to muster support. Shared strategic resources, such as the Nile River, have also offered opportunity for inter-state competition, often through third-party support for domestic adversaries in rival states.²⁴⁶ While the conflicts in Somalia and Somaliland, as well as between Ethiopia and Eritrea, challenged the fluidity of nation state borders, interventionist foreign policy, such as Ethiopia's involvement in Somalia and the sponsoring of proxy forces, inherently created trans-border dynamics to conflicts in the region.²⁴⁷ This has been compounded by economic interdependence regarding regional strategic resources, the cross-

²⁴² Mesfin, "The Horn of Africa as a security complex: Towards a theoretical framework", 2.

²⁴³ Annual Report, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2014.

²⁴⁴ Gersovitz and Kriger, "What is a civil war?" 18.

²⁴⁵ Mesfin, "The Horn of Africa as a security complex: Towards a theoretical framework", 3.

²⁴⁶ Mesfin, "The Horn of Africa as a security complex: Towards a theoretical framework", 7-9.

²⁴⁷ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, "The geopolitics of insecurity in the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula", *Middle East Policy* 18, no. 2 (2011): 128.

cutting nature of intercommunal conflicts, as well as shared regional challenges such as drought.²⁴⁸

Since the 1990s, the Horn of Africa has experienced acts of terrorism against both foreign interests and domestic populations. Weak governance and poor state security structures in Sudan and Somalia, for instance, have offered transnational terrorist organisations a safe haven.²⁴⁹ In particular, the absence of a legitimate government following the fall of Siad Barre in Somalia together with the country's extended coastline and proximity to Yemen have made it a particularly attractive terrorist host.

As outlined in Chapter 2, Somalia has been in a state of protracted conflict, at least since the fall of Barre's regime. The ensuing conflict, which has taken on many shapes and has come to include a myriad of non-state and pseudo-state actors, has also attracted foreign intervention. Although faraway actors such as the US intervened in the war in the 1990s, it is the involvement of Somalia's neighbours which has entrenched a regional dynamic to the conflict today and, by corollary, the regional dynamic of Al Shabaab's activity, specifically the involvement of Ethiopia and Kenya from 2006 onwards. Kenya's initial involvement in the conflict was aimed at resolving the ensuing crisis and sought to re-establish governance in Somalia, holding a reconciliatory process which extended for two years between 2002 and 2004, producing the TFG.²⁵⁰ In doing so, Kenya inevitably became embroiled in Somalia's crisis. Kenya also hosted the TFG until 2006 before it was relocated to Baidoa.

At the time, the UIC was able to bring a degree of stability to Mogadishu, to the aversion of the TFG, which was recognised as the legitimate authority in Somalia. The 2006 Ethiopian intervention in Somalia against the UIC not only accentuated the disintegration of the Somali state by re-emphasising clan-based allegiances through the perception that the Ethiopia-backed TFG favoured the Majeerteen-Rahawin alliance, but allowed Al Shabaab to swell around a compelling narrative of a foreign presence in Somalia.²⁵¹ While Ethiopia tried to engage both the TFG and UIC in talks in Khartoum aimed at forging a unity government, the pushback by

²⁴⁸ Ulrichsen, "The geopolitics of insecurity in the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula", 128.

²⁴⁹ Mesfin, "The Horn of Africa as a security complex: Towards a theoretical framework", 13.

²⁵⁰ Brian Hesse, "Two Generations, Two Interventions in One of the World's Most-Failed States: The United States, Kenya and Ethiopia in Somalia", *Journal of Asian and African Studies* (2014): 9.

²⁵¹ Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012*: 31. Also: Ulrichsen, "The geopolitics of insecurity in the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula", 123.

the UIC resulted in direct military engagement between Ethiopia and the UIC towards Baidoa.²⁵² Following the fighting, more radical elements within the UIC, which would later go on to form Al Shabaab's leadership base, called for a holy jihad against predominantly Christian Ethiopia.²⁵³

However, it was the Kenyan and Ethiopian interventions in 2011 which really served to transform Al Shabaab's domestic agenda to a regional one and were likely drives of Al Shabaab's use of transnational terror. Operation Linda Nchi was not a kneejerk response on Kenya's part. In his study of foreign intervention in Somalia, Brian Hesse highlights a significant transition within Kenya's foreign military operations. While in the early 2000s Kenya had been among the top ten troop contributing countries to UN peacekeeping missions globally, this number declined by 2005, coinciding with an uptick in US anti-terrorism assistance.²⁵⁴ It appeared as though the Kenyan military was gearing itself towards combating a very specific enemy on its next intervention mission. The main objectives of Operation Linda Nchi were to establish a security buffer zone between Kenya and Somalia and to recapture the port of Kismayo, in order to suffocate Al Shabaab's revenue sources. However, some commentators argue that the move was far more strategic, and was aimed to secure maritime trading for Ethiopia and the Lamu Port Southern Sudan Ethiopia Transport Corridor, a link between Kenya's Lamu port and South Sudan's oilfields. This motivated the intervention despite likely retaliation by Al Shabaab.

Following suit, Ethiopia (re)entered Somalia in November 2011, having withdrawn from the country in 2009. Although both the KDF and Ethiopian contingents went on to join the AMISOM operations, these independent operations singled them out as independent foreign actors in the conflict.

Since 2011, there has been a rise in the number of attacks targeting AMISOM and Kenyan positions within Somalia.²⁵⁵ There has also been a marked increase in the number of attacks in Kenya, with isolated and attempted attacks taking place in Ethiopia and Djibouti (an AMISOM

²⁵² Hesse, "Two Generations, Two Interventions in One of the World's Most-Failed States", 10.

²⁵³ "Somali Islamist leader vows holy war against 'Christian invaders'", *AFP*, October 2007, accessible, <http://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somali-islamist-leader-vows-holy-war-against-christian-invaders>

²⁵⁴ Hesse, "Two Generations, Two Interventions in One of the World's Most-Failed States", 11.

²⁵⁵ The Global Terrorism Database (GTD), National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), a subsidiary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security at the University of Maryland.

troop-contributing country and host to the US military base Camp Lemonnier). In accordance with the Regional War Complex Model, there is identifiable intent on the part of Al Shabaab to carry out attacks outside of Somalia, driven by this regional dynamic. However, such attacks are contingent on two additional factors: capabilities and opportunity. Opportunities for terrorist attacks can be fleeting, and are heavily dependent on the surrounding environment.

The interconnectivity provided by the Regional War Complex Model allows for domestic factors within the targeted countries to be taken into account. This is particularly useful in addressing the discrepancy between the number of Al Shabaab attacks in Kenya relative to the number in Ethiopia, given the equal intent to target these countries. This is likely related to the presence of local supporters of Al Shabaab in Kenya and Ethiopia, respectively. Initially, it appears that Al Shabaab has been able to carry out more attacks in Kenya because it has the *capacity* to do so. Looking at Somalia, this could initially be explained by the fact that Al Shabaab held more territory along the southern border with Kenya than the western border with Ethiopia. However, an additional dynamic has been the rise of Al Shabaab support among Kenyan nationals. In her study on the radicalisation of Kenyan youths, Anneli Botha found that a significant portion of individuals involved in Al Shabaab attacks outside of Somalia's borders were not Somali nationals.²⁵⁶ Although Al Shabaab has a history of hosting foreign fighters due to its allegiance with Al Qaeda and this could speak to the role of international Islamists, there has been a marked increase in the number of supporters originating from East Africa.²⁵⁷ In line with the regional war complex dynamic, Botha's study moves away from the notion that Somalia is the root cause of insecurity in the Horn of Africa to uncover some interesting dynamics in Kenya which contribute to Al Shabaab's regional activities.

In January 2012 the Al Katai'ib Foundation media outlet released a video in which Sheikh Ahmed Iman Ali introduced himself as the new leader of Al Hijra.²⁵⁸ Al Hijra formed part of the Muslim Youth Centre (MYC), which was initially formed in 2008 as an informal advocacy group focused on voicing the socio-economic grievances of Muslim communities in Kenya, particularly those of unemployed youths. The MYC had established branches in Nairobi, Mombasa and Garissa. However, Al Hijra's ideology was heavily influenced by Sheikh Aboud

²⁵⁶ Anneli Botha, "Radicalization in Kenya: recruitment to Al Shabaab and the Mombasa Republican Council", *Institute for Security Studies, Paper 265*, September 2014: 1.

²⁵⁷ Botha, "Radicalization in Kenya", 1.

²⁵⁸ 'Shabaab names new leader of Kenyan branch', *The Long War Journal*, 13 January 2012; http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/01/shabaab_names_new_le.php

Rogo, an open Al Shabaab sympathiser. In February 2012, the group declared allegiance to Al Shabaab.²⁵⁹ Despite this declaration, the group's rhetoric has remained distinctly domestic, reflecting an intention to bring jihad to Kenya. Coinciding with the formation of Al Hijra, Al Shabaab's rhetoric since 2013 has espoused a Kenyan focus, with references made specifically to the 'Muslims of Kenya' and 'bringing war to Kenya'.²⁶⁰ Kenya's security response to this threat has served to further stoke this anti-Kenya rhetoric regarding the Kenyan government among Al Hijra supporters. Since 2012, Al Hijra supporters and sympathisers have been rounded up in mass arrests targeting mosques, specifically in Mombasa. There have also been reports of assassinations by unidentified perpetrators targeting 21 Muslim clerics in Mombasa, which Al Hijra has claimed were orchestrated by government forces.²⁶¹

From a rational perspective, domestic resources facilitated Al Shabaab's transnational campaign based on Al Shabaab's agenda. However, the foundations for the radicalisation of Muslim youths in Kenya have a much broader history.²⁶² Although radicalisation manifests at a personal level, there is evidence of broader dynamics which come to impact the radicalisation process. Studies into radicalisation find that involvement in terrorist acts is not a brash phenomenon, but stems from the gradual exposure and socialisation towards more radical behaviour, in which terrorism becomes a viable method of violence.²⁶³ This is particularly acute when extremism is able to manifest around issues that concern the wider community. According to Botha, drivers of radicalisation in Kenya have included real and perceived political and socio-economic marginalisation among the country's Muslim population, which comprises approximately 30 percent of the total population. Concerns among the Muslim population can be commandeered by extremist organisations, which often specifically target more vulnerable sections of a community, including unemployed male youths, in this regard.²⁶⁴ This can be capitalised on by transnational or international terrorist groups. Furthermore, the actions which the government takes in combating insecurity can also contribute to the

²⁵⁹ Thomas Jocelyn, "UN warned of Shabaab ally's 'new and more complex operations' in Kenya", *Long War Journal*, September 2013, accessible

http://www.longwariournal.org/archives/2013/09/un_warned_of_shabaab.php

²⁶⁰ See: 'Al Shabaab vows to bring war to Kenyan soil', *Nairobi Wire*, 23 May 2014;

<http://nairobewire.com/2014/05/al-shabaab-vows-bring-war-kenyan-soil.html> ; 'Al Shabaab leader vows 'long war' against Kenya', *Al Jazeera*, 25 September 2013; <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2013/9/25/al-shabab-leader-vows-long-war-blood-and-destruction-against-kenya.html> ; 'Al Shabaab vows more Kenyan action', *ENCA*, 2 October 2013; <https://www.enca.com/africa/shabab-vows-more-action-against-kenya>

²⁶¹ Anderson and McKnight, "Kenya at war: Al Shabaab and its enemies in Eastern Africa", 18.

²⁶² Anderson and McKnight, "Kenya at war: Al Shabaab and its enemies in Eastern Africa", 20.

²⁶³ Botha, "Radicalization in Kenya", 13.

²⁶⁴ Botha, "Radicalization in Kenya", 25.

radicalisation process. Kenyan authorities have tended to see terrorism as a foreign, imported problem, despite evidence suggesting that terrorist attacks in Kenya have tended to involve Kenyan nationals.²⁶⁵ Domestic security operations in Kenya have disproportionately targeted Muslim nationals, particularly Somali Muslim nationals. This was most clearly demonstrated in the controversial ‘Usalama Watch’ operation, comprising security sweeps of Nairobi and Mombasa in April 2014. Over 3,000 people were arrested and incarcerated in the Kasarani stadium in Nairobi. Despite this, these means fail to address the domestic factors contributing to this regional threat.

Yet in reality there have been a multitude of foreign actors involved in the conflict in Somalia, ranging from neighbouring countries, to the US, UN and AU members. As such, the conflict in Somalia is not easily definable as regional; rather, it is a global conflict. This is reflected in Al Shabaab’s rhetoric, which has adopted an increasingly anti-US position, particularly since the group’s allegiance with Al Qaeda as well as the continued involvement of the US, UN and other international actors in the country. The authority of the FGS extends little beyond Mogadishu, and the government’s monopoly of force continues to be challenged, including in the capital. The government remains heavily dependent on AMISOM and the conflict within Somalia is inherently an international one. As a force multiplier, transnational terrorism allows Al Shabaab to threaten its adversaries in the regional playing field, including distant players such as the US, as evidenced by the attack in Djibouti City in May 2014, in which three people were killed and 15 injured in a suicide bombing targeting a restaurant frequented by US and French military personnel.²⁶⁶ Here, foreign nationals were targeted in retaliation for occurrences within Somalia, which thus multiplied the group’s perceived capabilities of targeting its Western enemies within the Horn of Africa.

Independent interventions by Ethiopia, Kenya and the US prior to the formation of Al Shabaab facilitated the formation of a regional war complex which has been exacerbated by more recent foreign involvement in Somalia. Al Shabaab’s transnational activity is likely to be part of the

²⁶⁵ Gabrielle Reid, “Pride and prejudice: Kenya’s response to the Garissa attack misses the mark”, *Africa Risk Bulletin*, a product of Salamanca Group, accessible at http://salamanca-group.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/150617-Africa-Newsletter-June_print.pdf

²⁶⁶ “Somalis suspected in Djibouti suicide bombing”, *Al Jazeera*, 25 May 2014; <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/05/somalis-suspected-djibouti-suicide-bombing-2014525123432312539.html>

broader regional conflict dynamic which has involved Ethiopia, Kenya, the AU, UN and the US, among other international and foreign actors.

Chapter 6: Evaluation and Conclusion

The focus of this study has been to determine the strongest explanation for Al Shabaab's use of transnational terror. According to Rational Choice Theory, an actor should possess stable and consistent (political) goals, weigh the anticipated benefits against the expected costs of available options of action, and select the option with the optimum expected utility.²⁶⁷ Yet it is evident that Al Shabaab has transformed its objectives over time, moving between nationalist and jihadist objectives, rendering the first assumption untrue. Furthermore, with Kenya choosing to remain committed to its operations in Somalia, AMISOM renewing its mandate for the fight against Al Shabaab, and transnational attacks attracting foreign actors such as the US to bolster not only its own counterterrorism capabilities in the region but also those of Somalia's neighbours, for example, these transnational attacks have arguably had the opposite effect than that which was intended, which should have called for a change in strategy by the group. While acts of transnational terror function as force multipliers for the group, they have done little beyond bolstering Al Shabaab's international reputation in achieving its stated objective of ridding Somalia of foreign forces. Having thus failed to meet the first and second criteria of evaluation, Rational Choice Theory cannot be seen as the most useful in explaining Al Shabaab's transnational activity.

Nevertheless, what is most identifiable and most clearly demonstrated in the Rational Choice Model is that Al Shabaab is adaptable. The Rational Choice Model allowed us to trace the transformation of Al Shabaab from its independence in 2007 to the state of the organisation following the loss of Kismayo in 2012. From this, we were able to garner that Al Shabaab is a dynamic organisation which bends and transforms not only as a result of changes in its objectives, but in relation to the environment in which it primarily operates. However, the Rational Choice Model fell short in assessing the impacts of leadership change within Al Shabaab in 2008. As the theory incorporates collective action by assuming that the group's actions can be equated to the actions of individuals, the model demanded that Al Shabaab be understood to be acting as a single entity. Although it is arguable that the preference of the leader can be equitable with the preference of the group as a whole, there is an underlying possibility that contradictions between the preferences of group members could lead the organisation to act more or less in favour of a particular objective. Leadership challenges may

²⁶⁷ Max Abrahams, "What terrorists really want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism strategy", *International Security* 32 (4) (2002) : 86.

also lead individuals within the group to take stronger positions. Although beyond the scope of this study, there is perhaps a need to examine the shift in leadership dynamics within Al Shabaab as an explanation for the organisation's activities as a whole and what the latest shift following the recent death of Godane may mean for Al Shabaab going forward.

The Spill-over model did not provide a strong explanation for the drivers of Al Shabaab's use of transnational terror, largely due to its reliance on anecdotal evidence concerning Al Shabaab recruitment within the Dadaab refugee camp. Thus, while the spill-over theory assumption that Somalia has been engaged in a domestic conflict which has led to population movements to neighbouring countries may hold true, there is a lack of empirical support. Although the study chose to focus on the Dadaab refugee camp, it would be beneficial in a future study to compare Al Shabaab recruitment from Dadaab and the Dollo Ado refugee located in Ethiopia, the country which hosts the second-highest population of Somali refugees. However, while this would likely give light to the role of spill-over conflict, a regional war complex approach may be best suited for such a study, in order to fully capture the Ethiopia-Somalia dynamic. Nevertheless, the Spill-over Model revealed that while refugee recruits may become foot-soldiers for the organisation, this does not necessarily translate into a driver for the use of transnational terror.

The Regional War Complex Theory offered the strongest explanation. We have seen the protracted involvement of foreign actors in Somalia, including actors directly engaged in war with Al Shabaab within Somali territory. There is a multiplicity of actors which are highly engaged in the conflict, deriving from the intervention on the part of a government. This was supported by Kenya's Operation Linda Nchi as well as the presence of US and UN forces in Somalia. Specifically, the study explored the notion of Kenya's growing domestic threat as an explanation for the entrenched Al Shabaab presence in Kenya. Although the Rational Choice and Regional War Complex models offered insights into Al Shabaab's intent to use transnational terror, it was the group's capabilities and available opportunities which allowed the group to do so. By tracing the domestic support network in Kenya beyond spill-over factors, the model revealed that Al Shabaab's regional activity in Kenya was also dependent on the capabilities present within Kenya versus the group's capabilities elsewhere, such as Ethiopia. While this does have implications for the observed low incidence of Al Shabaab attacks in Ethiopia, this study failed to fully capture the dynamic of Al Shabaab in Ethiopia. This was a consequence of both limited academic resources on the matter and limited public reporting due

to high information control regarding attacks against the government and perpetrators thereof in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, ostensibly, it appears that Al Shabaab has been able to carry out more attacks in Kenya because it has the capacity to do so owing to domestic dynamics.

Each of the three theories discussed provides a degree of insight into Al Shabaab and how the organisation operates. Nevertheless, it is most evident that no single or unitary explanation can be used to fully explain the drivers of Al Shabaab's use of transnational terror. This is because Al Shabaab has assumed a multitude of functions and identities since its inception.²⁶⁸ The group operates as both a terrorist organisation and an insurgent group, but has at times provided governance to communities in the territories it controlled. Al Shabaab cannot easily be understood as a unitary actor and, while it may claim attacks in a unified manner, the orchestration of these assaults is likely to be reliant on a multitude of interlocking networks which navigate between and within national borders.

Overall, Regional War Complex proved the strongest explanation, while Rational Choice Theory most clearly highlighted Al Shabaab's intent to transform from a domestic actor to a regional one, and the Spill-over Model showed that refugees could offer a recruitment source. The conflict in Somalia has inherently been an international one, both through the role of foreign intervention and the role of international Islam and transnational Islamists. Yet, the capabilities which facilitated the attacks in Kenya were not only a consequence of Kenya's involvement in Somalia in combating Al Shabaab, but also the mechanisms through which Al Shabaab was able to connect with individuals outside of Somalia that were facilitated by domestic factors within Kenya. The shift in the nature of attacks in Kenya witnessed between 2013 and 2015 shows a growing understanding of local politics, as well as religious and ethnic dynamics of localities, through the specific targeting of civilians perceived to be outsiders to the community.²⁶⁹ It is likely that Al Shabaab has begun to capitalise on Kenya's religious and ethnic divisions in a distinct shift from its earlier low-level and indiscriminate attacks between 2012 and 2013. This likely indicates an acute awareness of the domestic and local dynamics within Kenya and is indicative of the presence of local recruits within the organisation. The distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim targets serves to cement Al Shabaab's identity

²⁶⁸ Bendtsen, Andersson, Hansen and Kristensen, "Conflict in Somalia: Conceptualising Al Shabaab", 75.

²⁶⁹ "Al Shabaab Activities in Kenya; Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project", *ACLED*, <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/al-shabaab-in-kenya-august-2015-update/>

outside of Somalia, where the group cannot rely on the Somali versus ‘foreigner’ division, allowing the group’s jihadist identity to surpass its nationalist one.

Al Shabaab as a transnational actor should not be seen as a linear transformation of the group, moving outwards from Somalia, but as an interlinked web between countries in the Horn of Africa, where domestic vulnerabilities such as political and socio-economic marginalisation and a vulnerability to radicalisation allow for the cross-pollination of intent, and the capabilities to carry out attacks. It is evident that Kenya remains the most prominent target in Al Shabaab’s regional campaign, in which a domestic support structure has facilitated the regionalisation of the group far more than the group’s intent to do so. Looking ahead, governments will need to refocus their counterterrorism policies to encompass more than a military response in a neighbouring country.

Looking forward, with the Kenyan government having responded to the April 2015 Garissa attack with a blanket approach in line with its previous strategies, and vowing to eliminate Al Shabaab in Somalia, a policy shift in the near term in Kenya seems unlikely. There is a clear rationale for improving security measures within the refugee complex, as explored in Chapter 4. Furthermore, the Kenyan government has begun to construct a wall between Kenya and Somalia, which is expected to extend some 630km along the porous border, which may indeed prevent Somalia-based Al Shabaab supporters conducting cross-border attacks. However, as discovered in the exploration of the regional war complex in the Horn of Africa, in order to truly counter the Al Shabaab threat it faces, Kenya will need to address its domestic threat, which has ultimately facilitated the regionalisation of Al Shabaab.

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Appendix A

Clan dynamics in Somalia

The Somali clan structure is based on a patrilineal lineage type. Genealogies define the kinsmen as belonging to certain clans according to the ancestor from whom they stem. This lineage has evolved to include a social contract in which individuals find unity and identity within their specific clan, above all other identities, including nationalist ones.²⁷⁰ From this, a system of customary laws and practices (known as ‘*xeer*’), which (re)enforce the sovereignty of traditional authorities, have become entrenched in Somali society, specific to the different clans.²⁷¹ Clan families are divided by a system of patrilineal descent into clans, primary lineage and other sub-divisions contributing to a traceable kinship. Clan elders, known as *Guurti*, represent their clans at the highest political level. This deeply entrenched customary law and traditional leadership governs communities independently of modern state structures.²⁷²

The population is divided into six major clan families: the Darod, Isaaq, Dir and Hawiye, the nomadic-pastoralists known as the ‘noble clans’, as well as the Rahanweyn and Digil, the sedentary agro-pastoralists.²⁷³ These six clans are further divided into sub-clans, which are progressively divided into smaller groups.²⁷⁴ In addition, Somali society hosts groups known as ‘the minorities’. These groups, which include the Bantu, Bajunis and Barawanis, are not considered to be clans.²⁷⁵ Clans usually control specific territories which have been defined over time as a result of nomadic migration circuits.²⁷⁶ In Somali tradition, the rights of groups are effectively protected (from rival clans) by force, or the threat of force. Weaker clans and subgroups are thus driven to seek protection from stronger clans, entering into alliances with them.²⁷⁷ These alliances form a wider social contract to ensure mutual benefits.

In literature on post-colonial Somalia, there is a general consensus that a ‘nationalist’ Somali identity emerged and gradually altered existing clan identities. However, this process was disrupted by both the Ogaden War (1977-1978) and Siad Barre’s regime, in which Barre

²⁷⁰ Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD)

²⁷¹ Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD)

²⁷² Seth Kaplan, “Somalia’s Complex Clan Dynamics”, *Fragile States*, accessible at <http://www.fragilestates.org/2012/01/10/somalias-complex-clan-dynamics/>

²⁷³ Bendtsen, Hansen and Kristensen, “Conflict in Somalia: Conceptualising Al Shabaab”, 7538.

²⁷⁴ Bendtsen, Hansen and Kristensen, “Conflict in Somalia: Conceptualising Al Shabaab”, 7538.

²⁷⁵ Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD)

²⁷⁶ Bendtsen, Hansen and Kristensen, “Conflict in Somalia: Conceptualising Al Shabaab”, 7539.

²⁷⁷ Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD)

politicised the alliances between Marehan, Ogaden and Dhulbahante (M.O.D) clans within government leadership positions.²⁷⁸

In the absence of government structure following the fall of Barre's regime in 1991, these clan identities, which surpassed a nationalistic identity for the people of Somalia, were consolidated and further legitimised by international bodies attempting to work with clan leadership in order to end the political crisis in the country.

²⁷⁸ Bendtsen, Hansen and Kristensen, "Conflict in Somalia: Conceptualising Al Shabaab", 7540.